

SCORPION KING'S KELLY HU

AMERICAN PIE'S SHANNON ELIZABETH

Femme Fatales

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH
the women of

vip



June 2002 Vol 11 No 7



MICHELLE YEOH, RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES, SUPERMAN & PHYLLIS COATES

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Femme Fatales Contents

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 7

The Lascivious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction

JUNE 2007

As we continue to celebrate ten years on the newstands, we can't help but ponder how we have managed to stay on top for so long. Over the years, we've watched many other magazines dedicated to low-budget and independent films come and go. What makes *Femme Fatales* so special? What do we do differently than the rest?

We could have easily followed in the footsteps of other "skin" magazines, but then again, when you have 100 pages of women flashing their fishy fan-bags right in your face, don't they all start to look the same? Admittedly, the early days of *FF* debilitated in a bit of naivety, but after careful consideration, we decided to leave the full-frontal factor to the Playboy magazines of the world. We gave ourselves a new challenge: we wanted to bring you exciting yet tasteful photographs of our "volunteers," in ways that celebrate both their sexuality and their intelligence.

Our risks are paying off. Sales are up 120% since we "revamped." And it seems the change is agreeing with you, our readers. Several bookstore chains have reported that they couldn't keep last month's anniversary double issue on their shelves. That's what we like to hear.

We are committed to exposing you to the sexier side of the game. We will discover new femmes while celebrating the femmes of days gone by. And we will continue to deliver exclusive one-on-one interviews with femmes, whether they're in front of the camera or behind it, brought by our talented writers and photographers whose passion for the game is evident. No other game magazine can promise you that.

So, let's kick off summer with the hottest of the hot: Pamela Anderson and the ladies of the super sexy syndicated show, *VIP*. Who better embodies the spirit of the femina belli than Anderson, a successful producer as well as a breathtaking beauty?

Ferraro Fatsies can't be compared to anything else. We give good people

and have used it for



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PUBLISHER: Colleen Casey Clarke. **EDITOR:** Lisa Cochran, Lisa Tomczak-Walington. **BUREAU:** Los Angeles/ Mitch Perone. New York/ Dan Scapporchi. Pittsburgh/ Mike Wit. **EDITORIAL ADVICE:** Alan Jones. Toronto/ Paul Wark. **CONTRIBUTORS:** Jason Paul Collins, Ross Pleasant, Craig Reid, Don Scapporchi, Chuck Wagner, Mike Wit. **PRODUCTION:** Lisa Cochran, Jason Paul Collins, Lisa Tomczak-Walington. **CIRCULATION MANAGER:** LeTroya Stephenson. **ADVERTISING:** Jason Paul Collins.

[illegible]

FORMER SKELETON WITH L15-5708 is located nearby at T340 W. Elevation 800. Form No. S. 40430 (1982) 344-444.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: PPSNME, 767 ALICE F.O. Box 209 Oak Park, IL 60468-0209. Back issues \$40; Single copies \$17. Change orders: Single copies when purchased from publisher.

ALL INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING: This report is prepared by a self-employed, unpaid member. Contents are not to be used for any other purpose without the express written permission of the author.

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ATTRACTIONS F A T A L E



After being
doomed
LEGALLY
BLONDE, Toni
McClure
scored a
FATAL KISS
and had a
NIGHT CAP,
both certain to
show up on
THE B MOVIE
SHOW.

●Toni McClure has been busy. She was hitman in last summer's surprise hit **LEGALLY BLONDE**, as the over-indulgent mother of would-be lawyer Peaches Walterspoon. McClure also recently appeared in the warpage thriller **FATAL KISS** and is also making the rounds in Cinema's thirteen-episode **NIGHT CAP**. Ironically, she can also be seen as the co-host of **THE B MOVIE SHOW**, in which she slams the covers of B-movies in the tradition of *Rhonda Shear*. Watch for an interview with the busy blonde in an upcoming issue!

●Cheremora has scheduled an August release for the American version of the Japanese smash hit **THE RING**. Naomi Watts stars as the reporter caught up in the horror tale about several people who received a phone call shortly after watching a video tape that predicted their deaths within seven days. Her character name has been changed from *Nanako* in the original to Rachel. Let's hope director Gore Verbinski retains the style and suspense level of the Japanese film.

●A trio of late noir classics are on their way from VCI Entertainment and they're loaded with terrific fatalities. Two sultry roadheads, Arlene Dahl and Rhonda Fleming, play sisters in the 1956 crime drizzle **SUSPIRIOS SCARLETT**. Fleming is in love with the new city mayor, but

crooked attorney John Payne turns her head. Dahl is her troubled sister who is always on the verge of going to jail. Double crosses abound in this tale of big city corruption.

In **RAW DEAL** (1947), Glenn Trevor and Marsha Hunt are both interested in Dennis O'Keefe, a fugitive on the run out to get revenge on the man who framed him and sent him to jail. Trevor, his long time girlfriend, helps O'Keefe to break out of jail. He thinks social worker Hunt will be a good hostage so he kidnaps her. Later, he finds himself falling in love with Hunt as he tracks down his prey.

Jane Randolph plays one of the leaders of a counterfeiting gang the treasury department is trying to smash in the 1948 production **TWENTY-ONE**. Randolph, who appeared in **THE CAT PEOPLE**, **CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE**, and was the insurance investigator in **ABYSS** and **COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN**, was also

the ice skating model for *Bambi* in the Disney classic. **LOST IN SPACE**: Jane Lockart plays the wife of an undercover agent working on the case. VCI can be visited at www.vci.com/index.htm.

●Erika Eleniak has come a long way since she played Elinor's pretty girlfriend in *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*. As *THE PLAYMATE* and *IS-BAYWATCH* beauty stars, as "Sara Morgan" a plucky off-camera wide in **SECOND TO DIE**, a new thriller from New Concordia. Kimberly Rowe, who played "Lustula" in the erotic series **JUSTINE**, co-stars as "Anber". Sara's sister. After Anber leaves Sara, he has been found dead in his swimming pool, she finds her sister's diary, in which she relates her growing unhappiness with her marriage, leading up to the death of her husband. Unfortunately, a "second to die" clause in his insurance policy prevents Sara from collecting the death benefit. Another person has to die for the policy to be paid. Sara: Treachery, revenge, murder, desert, and a neat double-cross up the alley.

●Gorgeous Joan Severance, who starred in Roger Corman's **BLACK SCORPION** movies, plays a

rookie prosecutor in **MATTER OF TRUST**, a new release from USA Films which she also co-produced. When Severance is assigned to prosecute a serial killer, she begins getting death threats. Ahead she will be taken off the case when her doctor/husband is kidnapped, and turns to an ex-lover for help.

●Angelina Jolie is also plagued by dire predictions in the 20th Century Fox film **LIFE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT**. Stephen Henck, who cut his directorial teeth on **CRITTERS** and **BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE**, helms the film. Jolie plays Liana Kerrigan, a woman who seems to have it all: a great job, superstar boyfriend, and a fabulous apartment. Suddenly, her world is turned upside down when a sidewalk fortune teller makes several predictions which come true, including one that she will die in a week.

Jolie's **ORIGINAL SINS**, based on Cornell Woolrich's "Waltz Into Darkness," was largely overlooked in theaters, but is now available in an uncut, minor version on DVD.

●Stakes British sci-fi is alive and kicking. Ytse Steengard, the gorgeous blonde from **LUST FOR A VAMPIRE**, is featured in **ZETA ONE**, a tongue-in-cheek tale of a parallel universe right here on earth, hitting DVD from Image Entertainment. Based on stories in *Zet-*

women who are at odds with Mayor Roudon who is out to dominate the Angwans. The luxurious cast also includes Anne Galy, Valerie Leon and Brigitte Skay.

●Columbia TriStar has just re-



Angelina Jolie is plagued by dire predictions in **LIFE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT**.

leased a Sherron Tweed double bill. The former *Playmate*, who has appeared in dozens of erotic thrillers, stars in **FORBIDDEN SINS** and **HUMAN DESIRES** on this new DVD. In the first film, strip club owner David Mulholland is arrested, accused of murdering one of his dancers. His attorney, "Maureen Doherty" (Tweed), comes up against her ex-husband who is investigating the case. Things quickly heat up as Doherty begins to feel more than a client-attorney relationship with the accused killer.

The second feature, **HUMAN DESIRES**, takes place amidst the backdrop of high fashion. Tweed plays "Alisa Royce," a fashion bigwig who decides to promote her new clothing line with a pajama party contest. When the leading contender for the modeling assignment is found dead in a swimming pool, Alisa hires a detective to prove the drowning was no accident.

●The Thatcher, a bizarre serial killer, stalks a city. The only clues to his crimes are massive amounts of blood found near trash dumpsters. When he is finally captured in **DARK ASYLUM**, a new psychological thriller from Lions Gate Entertainment, he is taken to an all but abandoned asylum scheduled for closure. Model-actress Paulina Porcino stars as Dr. Maggie Bellis, a psychologist who is called to the dreary institution to evaluate the killer. Maggie tries to communicate with the killer, but he refuses to cooperate. Suddenly, he manages to escape,



Erika Eleniak is destined to be the **SECOND TO DIE**.

to magazine, and never released statements, the story has the Angwans kidnapping young women who are then indoctrinated into their society. Dawn Adams plays "Zeta," the head of this race of

kill most of the staff and guards and stalk Maggie through the facility.

●**CHARLIE'S ANGELS** headliner Cameron Diaz plays juggle forces with **MARRIED WITH CHILDREN**'s Christine Applegate and **CRUEL INTENTION**'s Selma Blair for **THE SWEETEST THING**, a new comedy about a female player who doesn't believe in Mr. Right (not Mr. Right Now). She's caught on-guard, however, when she meets the dashing Peter (DEEP BLUE SEAS's Thomas Jane) and falls in love. After what turns out to be a one-night stand, her obsession with his whereabouts leads to an out-of-control road trip with her best friends to find him. Parker Posey (**SCREAM 2**) and Jason Statham (**TV's THE HOGAN FAMILY**) co-star.

Meanwhile, Diaz has agreed to return with Drew Barrymore and Lucy Liu for **CHARLIE'S ANGELS 2**. McD will return to his directing duties, though Bill Murray, who clashed with Liu during the original film's production, has not signed on. However, hopes are higher for cameo by the original Angels, Farrah Fawcett, Kate Jackson, and Jaye Smith, some of whom have set only expressed interest, but confessed to getting a high-look out of the first film. No word on an appearance by the other long-running Angel, Cheryl Ladd.

●Crafted by filmmakers dedicated to the sport of surfing, **THE UNTITLED SURF GIRLS PROJECT** brings together world-class surfers in front of the camera and behind the scenes, and features some of the best sequences of women surfing ever captured on film. Starring **THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS** femme Michelle Rodriguez, Kate Rowen, and Matthew Davis, the story follows beach babe Anne Marie, who only lives to conquer waves and count the days until the Pip Masters surf competition. Having transported herself to Hawaii with no one's blessing but her own, she finds all she needs in the adrenaline-charged surf scene...until pro quater-

back Matt Tolman comes along. Anne Marie starts losing her balance—and finding it—as she falls for Matt. Watch for the romantic adventure Summer 2002.

●**LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** is finally getting the special Edition DVD treatment for which fans have



Christine Applegate, Selma Blair, and Courtney (Christine Applegate) are playing to win in **THE SWEETEST THING**.

been clamoring. MGM will release the disk with a new documentary by David A. Szulc, author of the amazingly detailed book *Woe: Craven's Last House On The Left: The Making of a Cult Classic* (available through www.lasthouse.com). Szulc's documentary included cast and crew interviews, never before seen stills and other extras.

The studio will also be releasing special edition DVDs of **THE FOG** and **THE HOWLING**, each with their own retrospective documentaries later this year.

●Australian actress Claude Karvan, who will appear as Sate Neborio in **STAR WARS EPISODE II: ATTACK OF THE CLONES**, plays a double dealing femme fatale in Tom's **RISK**. Clyn Brown is John Kresley, an insurance adjuster who conspires with enforcer Louie Roncotti (Kiersey) to play fraudulent claims. The greedy, self-centered Louie brings fire (house of cards) crashing down when she decides to breach out.

●**Lady Death**, the popular and long running character from Chaos Comics will soon be on the screen

ADV Films, one of the premiere distributors of anime, has struck a deal with Chaos to produce an anime series based on the character. The film, produced in Korea by Sunbin Image Pictures, is set in Sweden in the 18th century.



Well, Cheryl Ladd is back to play her original character in **CHARLIE'S ANGELS 2**.

Hope, a beautiful young woman, is accused of being a disciple of the devil and sentenced to death. A pure soul, Hope is reborn as Lady Death, who sets out to battle Lucifer and the forces of evil. The film will be made up an all digital, wide screen, feature length presentation.

●**SATAN'S CREEPLEADERS**, Geydon Clarke's hilariously bad



As anime, **Satan's Crepleaders** to protect her son, from the film.

and thoroughly enjoyable story of a squad of rubicombi's (being slow scientists), has been released on DVD from VCI Home Entertainment. Though considered a prime example of '70s horror exploitation, which stars John Ireland, John Cassavetes, and horror love, Yvonne DeCarlo who head the cover of witches, the film is actually so tame, with no nudity or bloodshed, it received a "TV" rating! Scary Kerry Sherman plays "Peb", one of the cheerleaders who has the real power of darkness and turns the tables on the Satanists. Her delectable co-stars include Alisa Powell (**THE TOOLBOX MURDERERS**), Sherry Marks (**HOMETOWN U.S.A.**), Hilary Horan (**YOUNG DOCTORS IN LOVE**), Robin Greer (**MAN TROUBLE**), and Jacqueline Cole (**JOYSTICK**).

●The latest from Central Park Media's Adult Pulp Cinema line is **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**, starring the seductive Melodie Klump. The actress plays Shon, a deadly woman who's been raised since childhood as a killing weapon for a mob fronted by a religious order. Shon is particularly adept at her job until she meets a photo journalist and falls in love. Her former master loses on the beautiful killer and the show is on.

●Claudio Black, who plays Officer Argyr Sun on **FARFARCE** and appeared in **QUEEN OF THE DAMNED** and **PITCH BLACK**, has added a new page to her career. Black will be heard as the voice of Mikhi, a villainous Steel Angel in the first episode "Angel On My Shoulder" of the **STEEL ANGEL KURUMI** anime series.

●Mrs., a pretty-but-dependent woman, begins to suspect her husband is having an affair. It's not her only problem. Seema's hubby is risking his life as the "Son of the Boston Strangler" in New Canaan's **THE STRANGLER'S WIFE**. Boston actress Sarah Hulls plays the beleaguered "Mrs."

●We've all heard the stories now referred to as urban legends. Well, Playboy has released their version of those tales in **SEXY URBAN LEGENDS**. Each vignette details a story with a twist ending including some familiar tales but with that extra Playboy twist. Without going too much away, there's the one right stand there's too good to be true, the seductive visit by room, and the pickup there's more than you bargained for.

●A Clean Breast Rose Meyer's three volume autobiography, is out, boasting photographs of some of the most voluptuous actresses to parade across the exploitation landscape. Included are Lorne Leeland, Turk Silvers, Uchi Dugard, Ernie Gavin, Robin Marlowe, Pandora Peaks, and many more. "I wanted a complete history of my life filled with as many ecstatically overbuilt women



Eden (Michelle Rodriguez), Anne Marie (Kate Rowen), and Lorne (Lorne Leeland) live together in a Hawaiian beach shack in the romantic adventure **THE UNTITLED SURF GIRLS PROJECT**.



as possible," said Meyer who took thirteen years to finish his book. "There are over 2,500 photos in the book. I used the ones that I personally like the best, the ones that displayed my life story. The photos of my friends in the war and of Eva Meyer are probably my favorites."

From his early movies like **THE IMMORAL MR. TEAS** and **EVE AND THE HANDYMAN**, Meyer carved out his own niche in the film world, producing such cult hits as **FASTER PUSSEYCAT**, **KILL! KILL!** and wacky erotic fantasies like **SUPERHEROES** and **UP**. His fascination with well-endowed women goes back to his childhood. "I was first influenced as a young boy by Al Capp and his cartoons of women with large bosoms," he said, "the 'Daisy Mae'-type girls with bright faces and voluptuous bodies."

At eighty-years-old, Meyer hasn't lost his spark. When asked if he interviewed anyone for the book he snapped, "Why interview anyone? The book is about me."

"I'll never stop working," vowed Meyer. "My latest video is on the market right now, **RUGS MEYERS INNOCENT PEARLS**."

● **WARRIORS** of **WH1**'s new biography show **DRIVEN** may recognize a face on the Jennifer Lopez episode. Turns out pretty Pamela Sutch (MP 11.4) was a former classmate of the Latin diva during their dance school days in New York City. Sutch, who put in several amazing performances in the controversial black-comedy **DUCK! THE CARBINE HIGH MASSAGE**, based on the Columbian shootouts. The island-recorder/producer receives ample amounts of coverage, dusting Lopez's act to law.

● The famous Marvel Comics superhero **DAREDEVIL**, **THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR**, has gone into production at 20th Century Fox for a possible January 2005 release. Ben Affleck stars as blind attorney "Matt Murdock" whose other senses have been heightened to superhu-

man powers. At night, Murdock becomes **Daredevil**, a fighting vigilante who battles the city's criminal forces. The famed Stan Lee created the character in 1964.

Jennifer Garner, who won a Golden Globe Award for her performance as "Byzantine Bristow" in **TV's ALIAS**, has been cast as martial arts expert Elektra Natchios, Murdock's love interest.

● Helen actress Monica Bellucci, who was cast as one of the vampire brides in **BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA** (1992) and has a featured role in next year's **MATRIX RELOADED**, plays Diopatra in **ASTERIX & OBERON: MISSION CLEOPATRA**. The film is based on the French comic book series by René Goscinny, in which the Egyptian queen makes a bet with Julius Caesar that she can have a palace built in the desert in three months. The young ruler, who will be crowned 4 Cleo loses the bet, heads for France to get a secret magic potion created by the Druids. A single drop of the elixir gives an individual supernatural strength. While the rest of Europe has fallen to the Roman legions, the potion has allowed the village in Brittany where Asterix and Obelix live, to hold out against the mighty Romans. Miramax has picked up the film for U.S. distribution.

● Brittany Murphy (**CHERRY FALLS**), Kim Basinger (**9 1/2 WEEKS**), and Melia Miller (**STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER**) support controversial recording artist Eminem in his first leading role as "Jinny" in **8 MILE**. Though now being promoted as fiction, the story follows an amazingly similar path of a young man trying to make it out of his rust-belt hometown atmosphere to succeed in the entertainment industry.

It may be recalled the dispute raised by Eminem's mother over slander caused by the character portrayed by Basinger in the film, which was directed by Curtis Hanson (**THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE**) and premieres this summer.

● Michael Myers and Laurie Strode have had their latest slasher refilled **HAL-**

LOWEEN: RESURRECTION [Though some graphics show the title as **HALLOWEEN-cute, huh?**]. Watch for Jamie Lee Curtis, Tylee Banks, Bianca Kajlich and other young lovers to be tormented when the film hits theaters July 18th.

● In other **HALLOWEEN**-related news, producer Debra Hill has made her directorial debut with the supernatural romance thriller **TALES NOT TOLD**. Scripted by Colin Peck, the film about a woman who must battle supernatural forces to save the man of her dreams, is currently scheduled for January 2005 theatrical release.

● Supermodel-turned-actress Rachel Hunter, plays "Amanda Flores," a homicide detective working on a case involving a serial killer in Arson Enforcement's new thriller **PENDULUM**. Amanda is yanked off the case and reassigned to the murder of a distinguished law professor. As she delves into the killing, she comes up against the city's rich and powerful. With the help of two beautiful lesbian law students, Amanda gets a glimpse into the victim's sordid world.

● Blonde bombshell Morgan Fairchild has been cast in the Showtime original movie **I WAS A TEENAGE FAULT**. Mr. Fair played by Robert Townsend, must deliver a soul to his boss, the Devil, in fifteen years and is in danger of ending up in the fiery pit himself unless he digs one up soon. Fairchild plays the Devil's voluptuous, seductive, girlfriend, Babylonian Fire

Toulan, and her daughter Alex, trying to bring the puppets back to life. They suddenly find themselves running from a mysterious group of fiendish toy-makers, who plan to steal the re-animation formula so they can unleash their own evil toys on the world. A director



Will Jamie Lee Curtis **HALLOWEEN VII** erupt as the **HALLOWEEN** goddess?

and cast have not been confirmed, though Charles Band will produce from a script by C. Courtney Joyner, who also scripted the extremely successful **PUPPET MASTER III: TOLUENS REVENGE**, directed by David DeCoteau in 1991.

● Judith Lewis has lent her vocal talents to the lead character "Nacmi Armitage" in the crime thriller **ARMITAGE DUAL-MATRIX**. A sequel to 1997's **ARMITAGE POLY-MATRIX**, which sold 150,000 units, the new story tells the story of an android, who is more human than anything created before but, working at the Marine Police Department and joining forces to fight the deadly Marton government. It was directed by Katsuhiko Aikawa and street dates June 25.

● **RAT RACE** is only Amy Poehler will star alongside Ashton Kutcher (**THAT '70s SHOW**) in New Line Greene's **THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT**. The thriller, about a young man (Kutcher) who tries to alter his past then discovers it's destroying his present, was written by Jay MacInnis Guber and Eric Bress (**FINAL DESTINATION 2**) who are also slated to direct.

Speaking of the sequel to the tear-jerking-death 2000 hit, **As Larter** and Tony Todd will return with new co-stars A.J. Cook (**TRIPPER**), Michael Landes (**SPECIAL UNIT 8**), and Linda Boyd. Kim Smith and Devon Bawa will not return, reportedly because

their asking prices were too high. ● **FIRESTARTER II: REKINDLED** (11.5/16) turned out to be such a massive hit for the Sci Fi Channel when it premiered in March 2000, the company will expand the Stephen King-based story into a weekly television series. The story will follow Charlie McGee (portrayed by Drew Barrymore in



The new **Sum** of **DRIVEN** as her buddy the



Brittany Murphy and Jimmy Fallon to get beyond 8 MILES.

who heads back to Earth to make sure Mr. Fair delivers the goods.

● Looks like the promised almost-eight-years ago **PUPPET MASTER VS. DEMONIC TOYS** will finally go into production as another original movie for the Sci Fi Channel later this year. The plot finds Robert Toulan, great nephew of original puppet master Andre



Will Margulies' Patricia (with Danny Nucci and Malcolm McDowell) enacts the FIRESTARTER II role in the T-series.

the 1964 original and Marguerite Moreau in the sequel) who will continue to battle the government agency which created her. Meanwhile, she will search out other victims of the government's experiments in hopes of helping them achieve their lives.

Neither Margulies nor other members of FIRESTARTER II have confirmed participation in the weekly series, as casting and an official airing date have not been completed as of this publishing. Keep up to date at www.sci-fi.com



Sci-Fi Channel's *ABOUT A BOY* (left) and *ABOUT A GIRL* (right) have been cast with a new cast of actors.

The Sci-Fi Channel has other productions headed to the small screen over the next year. Among them are *TAKEN*, a 20-hour epic spin-off series from Dreamworks Television and Steven Spielberg in December 2002. The adventure weaves together three generations and more than fifty years of American history to tell a tale of mankind's encounters with extraterrestrials. A number of one-hour specials will debut prior, including "behind the scenes" coverage, a field guide to alien abductions, and interviews with real people who claim to have been abducted.

Also on tap are several four-hour mini-series. A remake of *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*, in which a rag, rag fugitive fleet of human remnants escape the aliens responsible for the slaughter of their homeworld and meet a whole new set of challenges. Written by Ronald D. Moore (*MISSION IMPOSSIBLE*), the movie, which currently has no returning cast members of the orig-

inal TV series, will be directed Brock J. Elmer (*THE INVISIBLE MAN*) and produced by David Eick (*SPY GAMES*). A live-action version of the all-fans best-selling CD-ROM adventure game *MYST*, in which characters defy the boundaries of space and get entangled in the mystery of undiscovered worlds when they uncover magical books created by an ancient civilization hidden under the Earth's surface. Plus, the 1000 year love story *THE FOREVER WAR: THE CHRONICLES OF AMBER*, based on the three-and-a-half-million copies sold story by Roger Zelazny following a royal family with supernatural powers, and the seven hour series *ON THE SEVENTH DAY*, which lads government agencies, in an attempt to cure overcrowding, dividing the population into the seven days of the week, with individuals assigned to "live" out their life on the same day each week. They are kept in cryogenic suspension during the other six.

Fans of the film *DUNE* will rejoice by word of the follow up, *CHILDREN OF DUNE*, a six-hour mini-series based on the second and third *Dune* novels by Frank Herbert. The ensemble cast includes Julie Cox, Alice Krige, Jason Brooks, and Academy Award winner Susan Sarandon. Greg Yaitanes (*THE INVISIBLE MAN*) directs from a John Harrison (*DUNE*) script. Many of the *Dune* movie and mini-series may serve as backdrop plots for ongoing series.

● *THE MUMMY's* Rachel Weisz and Tim Collette of *THE SIXTH SENSE* are among a group of lovebirds being wooed by player Hugh Grant in *ABOUT A BOY*. Grant plays "Will," a rich, child-free Londoner who, in search of available women, pretends to have a job and attends single parent meetings. Based on the popular British novel by Nick Hornby, the comedy-drama is directed by Paul and Chris Weitz and will hit theaters May 17, 2002.

● *HELL ASYLUM* has Tara Dempsey recently wrapped the diary-style *FLASH!* and will lead headline *DEATHBED*, directed by Denny Dwyer (*CRYPTIC*) and produced by Stuart Borison (*RE-ANIMATOR*). Ms. Dempsey reports, "It's really excited if it's a very character-driven, and well-written script...I also just did my first film convention with J.R. Book-

water (*WITCHHOUSE 3*) in L.A. It's been really exciting to meet all these fans!" Get all the exclusive details from the *FLASH!* scanner herself in our next issue's cover story!

● Experience the ultimate road trip to Hades with the new supernatural shocker *HELL'S HIGHWAY*. Written and directed by Jeff Lenzy (*DEMONICUS*), the sexy shocker



They don't call 'em BLOOD SISTERS for nothing.

lets of four college friends who mistakenly pick up a female hitchhiker (do none of these kids ever watch and learn from horror movies?) who is both sexual and psychotic. After trying to turn the kids into her latest victims, the kids actually manage to bump her off instead. They continue with their travels, only to continue running into the psychopath around every bend.

The flick, starring adult film legend Ren Jeremy (*DERBY DOLLS DALLAS II*), Beverly Lynne (*THE COVEN*), and Phoebe Dollar (*PORNSTAR: THE LEGEND OF RON JEREMY*), was produced by Darrin Rampage and David S. Sterling, and is the first distribution collaboration between Brain Damage Films and Key East Entertainment.

Brain Damage has also produced the gory vampire thriller *BLOOD SISTERS*, also starring Dollar and newspaper Arms Men. Both films are available at



Searching Tanya Dempsey (in *Ward*) for photography has a number of new films on the way, including *FLASH!* and *DEATHBED*.



Stanley Donen's 1966 film *CHARADE* has been remade as *THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE* by famed director Jonathan Demme (*THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*). Starring Thandie Newton.

● Stanley Donen's 1966 film *CHARADE* has been remade as *THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE* by famed director Jonathan Demme (*THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*). Starring Thandie Newton.

(*BELOVED*) stars as Regina Lambert. Who, after returning from a trip where she's met the charming Joshua Peters (Mark Webber), finds both her bank account and her apartment have been emptied and her husband Chris (Stephen D-



Thandie Newton hopes Mark Webber will protect her from *THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE*.

lene) murdered. A trio of his old cohorts (Joong-Hoon Park, Ted Levine, and Lisa Gay Hamilton) immediately begin shadowing her in hopes of answering their own questions about Charlie and recovering a bundle of missing cash. Mystically, Joshua

has arrived in Paris to join her, and offers any help he can. Due film *THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE* also stars Tim Robbins, Christine Boisson, and Anna Karina.

● Enka Christensen (*TRAP-PIG*), Shiri Appleby, and Kate Burton star in the teen-obsession thriller *SWIM-FAN*. Seema Christensen is a teen-bopper with a crazed love for classmate Jesse Bradford (*CLOCK-STOPPERS*). The flick, by Philip Schneider and Charlie Bohl, was directed by John Polson and is slated for an August release by 20th Century Fox.

● Debra Black has directed the new demon love story *RESTLESS SOULS*. Written

continued on page 57





kelly hu

STARRING IN THE SCORPION KING OPPOSITE THE ROCK, THIS FORMER FF COVERGIRL FINALLY GETS HER SHOT AT THE A-LIST.

BY MITCH PERSONS



She's been left in the limo carrying the unconscious victim, who's still in a daze. Chen on the set? "It was like, 'Oh, she's giving them more work to do. I made her sit in the limo.'"

In the limo, she's been in a lot of years. (I owe you to their agent, Cassandra! THE MIMMY RUTHLESS, she said.) In a limo, to work with the supermodel lady to work in the future. (Cassandra was an advice to Memento [Stewart] and, a power in a gritty world, to be a woman in the world. She also provides a love interest for Memento, the director's version King (PWW champion Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson), and The Rock.) The lead is a piece of a rival's life.

"In order to get a part of Cassandra," says Hu, "I auditioned with hundreds of girls. The thing that I actually craved about auditioning for THE SCORPION KING was they were looking for all types of women, not just Asian-specific like myself. I auditioned with Victoria's Secret models, black girls, and blonde girls, some Hispanic girls. They were all over the gamut. The producers wanted someone who looked exotic, or looked different, or powerful, and I was really, really happy to win the role. I had been doing martial arts for so long, and had done the [TV] series. I would like every time I went into something I was known as 'The Martial Arts Girl.' So, once in the role, I got to break out of this. I was cast for something other than my knowledge of the martial arts."

"Playing Cassandra was a delight, a real change of pace. She is definitely an exotic. She is able to see the future, and she's been in a lot of times. She's a lot of things before they happen, and that's how he can see her."



Above and bottom left: Hu from her days on **MARTIAL LAW**. Top left and inset: Kelly and The Rock on the set of **THE SCORPION KING**.

"She sides with Memnon at first because it's she, only life she knows, but later on, of course, it's revealed that she's not there of her own will. When Mathayus captures Cassandra to use her as bait in a plan he has to defeat

Memnon, they turn into love interests."

from what is known about the less public side of The Rock: apparently falling in love with the character he plays in **SCORPION KING** is not such a difficult thing to do. "In person," continues Hu, "he is so low-key and so real. When I first met him I hadn't seen any of his stuff on WWF. I know this guy was a wrestler. I knew about his little raised-eyebrow thing. He would tell me all these little lines he would use in WWF that were pretty silly to me. And it was so funny. Somebody brought in a tape one day to the makeup trailer, and when I saw that tape of him performing as The Rock in WWF I could not believe that it was the same person. I thought to myself, 'This guy really is an actor. He is amazing in that character. He has such incredible charisma.' And then we were lucky enough to actually watch him live at the Staples Center in Los Angeles when he came back after the movie. The audience just ate him up, and how everyone was just entranced by him, and hung on his every word."

"This guy could be a politician easily. Let me put it that way: He has such a command for the audience, it's incredible. I wouldn't be surprised if he were our next governor (he [Minnesota's] Jesse Ventura). And what's really amazing is, it's not because Dwayne is a biker, not because he's loud and over the top, it's just in his aura. He is amazing that way."

Even with Johnson's charismatic persona, there were rampant su-

"It's amazing the following that one gets by doing a horror film like **IFRIDAY THE 13TH, PART VIII.**"

more that **THE SCORPION KING** was in "the trouble" and had to go through many reshoots and rewrites. Part of that trouble might have been that the film took place in the Middle East, and—combined with its graphic battle scenes—brought back memories of the tragic events of September 11. "About the reshoots, I'm not sure what is considered a lot [because I haven't really been involved in such a big movie, and I certainly haven't been involved in such a big-budgeted movie]. I mean, when I did **THE DOORS** many, many years ago, that was probably the biggest budget movie I'd ever done before this, but there were no reshoots involved in that for me. From what I understand, it's normal for a movie like this to have a lot of rewrites. Not a lot, but to have some new scenes put in, and just to spruce it up a little bit, because what from I had heard, the producers got more money to put into it, and I think Universal really believed in it.

"I don't really think that the events of September 11 affected our film. I know that there are a lot of films in Hollywood that have been affected in many ways, and have been canceled because of what happened. I think our film, being that [it takes place] in 3,000 BC, really doesn't get associated much with that, and the terrorism."

It so, Hu certainly has the ability to choose parts in films (**STRANGE DAYS**, **FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VII—JASON TAKES MANHATTAN**) that, while being disturbing and exciting, are also hugely entertaining. "FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VII—JASON TAKES MANHATTAN was my first film role ever. I played one of the victims. It was really fun for me to do, even though I didn't have a terribly large part. My mother actually tried it; I died at exactly the halfway point! I did get to spend eight weeks in Vancouver—Canada was being substituted for New York—and I learned a lot about cold weather and how to dress for rain.

"After a while these films actually become silly, and people sit in the audience and laugh. At a horror film, I had a very unusual death in that film, and you sort of come to expect that in a **FRIDAY THE 13TH**, especially when you get to part eight. Really, how many ways can you kill a teenager? And so they have to get outrageous just for things to be different, because out of eight movies, they've probably killed over a hundred kids. It gets to the point where it needs to be silly for people to remain interested.

"It's amazing the following that one gets doing a horror film like this, because there are so many people who are into it. I've signed, I think, more photos in those little sci-fi/horror conventions of my **FRIDAY THE 13TH** work than anything else.

"I used to be really scared of watching horror films. I guess I would just take them too seriously. When I finally ended up doing one, and [seeing] how things were done behind the scenes, now I can watch with a whole different eye and enjoy [them] so much more.

"I still have a hard time watching psychological thrillers. **SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** affected me for three months. I couldn't walk into my garage without my hair standing up on end—for three months! I couldn't get myself to watch **HANNIBAL**, because it took me so long to recover from the first film, and I heard that **HANNIBAL** was even more graphic. I'm not one of those people who can handle that kind of stuff very well, even as a child. I don't know what it is. I guess some people just do, and some people like me, just don't!" □



Writer, producer and star of **THE CONVENT** beauty and intellect draws on her Catholic s nuns-gone-bad bloodbath and knocks the b ass.

Chaton Anderson



Anderson as "Sapphire."

A young woman, sixteen-years-old at most, walks into a dark and solemn church, gas can in one hand, shotgun in the other. After blasting a priest and a number of nuns nearly in hell, the schoolgirl sets the church ablaze. Sure, we find out later that all the nuns were possessed cannibals, but that does nothing to diminish the joy of these opening scenes [sorry, that's the recovering Catholic in me talking]. **THE CONVENT**, the timeless tale of a group of young students who break into a supposedly haunted abandoned

When it really shouldn't be a surprise in this day and age, many fans are astonished to discover that the movie was written and co-produced by the blonde and winsome Chaton Anderson. "I've definitely gotten the comments—'you wrote that?' Whatever?" Anderson says. "I've always loved horror movies. Horror is my favorite genre. After that are probably the gangster/mob movies, like *GOODFELLAS* and all that. So I guess I've always had a 'male' taste in movies."

Thanks to some misunderstanding on how to correctly distribute the film domestically, **THE CONVENT** was only available in Atlanta on the grey market in bootleg form. It's saved the movie well, actually, as it developed a healthy cult following among hard-core horror fans, who found the unflinching slapstick gore to be refreshing in the wake of recent bloodless light films. Many viewers theorized that it was the violence against the clergy that kept **THE CONVENT** out of American homes for so long, but Anderson insists that it's not the case.

"Catholics seem to love it the most," she says. "They don't think it's blasphemous. They know better. So I was surprised that there have not been people offended by it. I was expecting more of a backlash. I've been to a lot of screenings all over the world for this film, a lot of people were pissed into these things, and I've seen very few people walk out. I times a screening and I invited a lot of people who are business associates, and a lot of these people are conservative, adult, some are Catholic. And I kept saying 'Okay, are you sure you want to come to my movie? You may think differently of me when you see this.' Giving everyone a disclaimer, but people in their titles are coming up to me saying, 'Oh, that was great! Loving it. Super Catholic people—I think projected 300'."

convent, is a gory tongue-in-cheek homage to the over-the-top horror movies of the '80s. Its numerous set pieces and multiple demons calling to mind such cult classics as **THE EVIL DEAD** and especially **NIGHT OF THE DEMONS**. The blood-soaked slapstick includes such moments as a woman's face being torn clean off, another with a glowing flashlight shoved through her mouth, while other victims are disemboweled, torn apart or otherwise receiving horrific last rites on their way to saving Satan. And then the always wonderful Achonne Barbado shows up to kick even more unholy

T, this trinity of talent,
school past for this
pinpoint stereotype on its
by Mike Watt

on





*"Catholics seem to love it the
it's blasphemous. I was expect*

take themselves seriously, the way our class [can get away with more]. Our movie does not take itself seriously. And if you take it seriously, then you have your own issues, and I'm not really concerned with people like that."

From the start, *THE CONVENT* feels like the fantasy of any student gunning down the authority figures that he or she just knows are demonic. As it happens—to no one's surprise—both Anderson and director Mike Mendez are products of Catholic school upbringing. "We had both gone to a St. Francis school in different parts of the country. He went to a boy's school, I went to an all-girls school. So we related. 'Okay, this is a sign, we should do the movie. We get it.' Then we named the school 'St. Francis' in the movie."

Growing further from real life, Anderson formed the meat of the story out of a particularly odd set of circumstances from her childhood. "There was a building in the town I grew up in—in Phoenix, Arizona—that was super-weird. It was an old, run-down, dilapidated home for runaway girls. I had become obsessed with going inside and finding out why this place had been turned down. We had heard all these rumors and legends that there were ghosts in there, Satanists living there, homeless people committing murders. We heard all sorts of stuff. But I had to get in there and see for myself."

"I convinced a group of people to go in there with me. I think my younger cousin was one of the people, [and] another girl who was just as obsessed as me. It was a huge building with dormitories, a library, a school, everything. But there was this kind of underground chapel that you could see from the top of the dormitories, but we couldn't figure out how to get in there. We went there every night for like a week, I swear to God. We'd have guys with us to break down the doors. It would be boarded up every night. There was a caretaker or someone who would board it up again every night, so every night it would get harder to break in. We finally discovered a way to get into the chapel. It was so spooky—you could see that someone had broken off the heads of the Virgin Mary, all sorts of really freaky stuff and we really wanted to get down there. Finally, we



found this lean-to outside that we could crawl across and get in. So my friend and I, being the gutsy ones, went first, since we were smaller. As soon as we got inside, the window shattered and fell on me and my friend. My friend actually had to have surgery because an artery was severed. I had to get stitches, but it was really dramatic and we had to get out of there. The police came, we almost got arrested. It was definitely one of those nights before the last climactic one that inspired the movie. Obviously, I embellished all sorts of stuff for the movie. My imagination took over and I began to think about what really could have happened that night."

The ideas for *THE CONVENT* sat in the back of Anderson's mind throughout USC film school, after which she immediately traveled to Europe. After a brief stint as a wartime journalist in the Yugoslav Republics for a British magazine, Anderson returned to the U.S. and found herself working for Alpine Pictures. It was there she met Mike Mendez.

"[Alpine] had distributed his first film, which was called *KILLERS*. Also known as *REAL KILLERS*. I was really passion-

Top: Chelton Anderson as a demonic Beppino. **Middle:** Adrienne Barbeau kills her for the Lord. **Below:** Allison Dunbar as a demon hunt.



most. They don't think
ting more of a backlash."

ole about the film. I really felt that the guy was up and coming, he was going to be an amazing director. And no one else had really taken notice. They would say things like 'yeah, the movie's going to make us money, but whatever.' But I just knew I convinced them to do a theatrical release of the film in LA—we did it on a really small scale, just two theaters, but enough to get [some reviews and notice in America, via LA, specifically. Mike and I became good friends through that. We found out that we had a lot in common. Mike had gone to Catholic school as well, only for a lot longer. And as soon as I said 'Demon Nuns,' he jumped on board."

It just happened that Alpine needed a horror movie of the time that Anderson had a completed script. Attaching Mike Mendez got the financial heads on board, and from there, it was just a matter of assembling the team. Things came together for the screenwriter and the director when they managed to land veteran actress Adrienne Barbeau. Barbeau is a horror icon thanks to her frequent work with her former husband, John Carpenter, in such films as *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* and *THE FOG*. With her "take no crap" attitude, she was perfect for the role of the adult Christine, who first battled the demon nuns in the '60s, as depicted in the film's opening sequence. Neither Anderson nor Mendez considered anyone else. "We were both set on having Adrienne Barbeau. The character was written for her. And a lot of big people were going for that part. I don't want to name any names, but we had a couple of actual Oscar-winner who wanted that part. Because there aren't a lot of strong female parts in that age-group. That's one of the things that attracted Adrienne. She was thrilled to go in and kick ass. She's just amazing. She's the consummate professional and she really does kick ass! It was a dream come true to work with her."

While much of the cast, aside from Barbeau, is comprised of mainly unknowns, there are a couple more familiar to horror audiences, who show up midway as a pair of campus policemen: Bill Moseley and Coole. Moseley is best known as "Choplop" in *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2*, and will appear in Rob Zombie's *HOUSE OF 1,000 CORPSES*. Coole, while less of a horror icon, is still a surprise. "Coole is a personal friend," says Anderson. "I pulled a favor to get him into that. Along with the soundtrack. The soundtrack is made up of my friends. Not the composed soundtrack, but the rap music in the background."

Anderson herself appears in the film, as Souli's acolyte, the ditzy would-be bad girl Sapphia. It is actually Sapphia, and her eagerness to please Souli, that sets the demonic forces loose once again. "I wanted to do something in the movie," says Anderson. "It was just a way for me to have fun in the film. I wanted to die and do some fun things, and be a demon. Although I ended up being a demon longer than anybody. I was always in demon makeup. My hair turned bright red from all the blood—had to go to a place to get it fixed. My skin turned red. I was always bloody and demonic. But I got to do some really fun shit. Break through doors—I did all my own stunts. It doesn't seem like much, but it's really difficult to run in five-inch heels while big heavy lockers are falling behind you. But I survived the blood, the fat, the flashlight through my face. I survived it all! [laughs]"

Another survival: working with a predominantly male production team. "It was totally a boy's club, and I had to go in and be a complete ball-buster to be heard. I learned how to fight, be hardcore in the situation. Hopefully I won't have to do that again."

In spite of the red-tape problems, *THE CONVENT* played as a midnight movie at the Sundance Film Festival and found its fan base almost immediately. What was the icing on the cake to An-



derson, a fan herself, was meeting some of her heroes on almost equal terms.

"The huge honor for me was the film played in Switzerland, in Heuvelate—the beautiful little Swiss village in the Alps. I got flown out for the festival and I happened to meet Tobe Hooper, who was one of the judges. He loved my film, I got to have dinner with him. It was just unbelievable! The *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* I had to sneak to view when I was little. I was so not allowed to see it. Meeting him was just a huge honor. He told me he thought it looked as if he had Adrienne compliment me on my writing. Some people want to win a gold medal, this did it for me!"

With *THE CONVENT* finding its home on Tamar Home Video, Anderson is looking ahead. "I'm starting my own production company, and I'm working on a great project called *MARCIA STUART ON AVID*. As you can tell from the spelling it has nothing to do with a woman heavyweight in the homemaking industry. It's fun and funky, a dark comedy. I love to play up the camp. I also have another horror thing in development. I'd like to see that get made as well. It's *SORORITY RUSH*. Just another campy, fun slasher movie. [Then there's my third project], also in development, is a really dark film called *DONOR*. I'm close to attaching a big name director to that. I don't want to jinx it right now, though. The last one is going to be a dark, evil horror movie." □

2 OF SID AND MARTY KROFFT'S

WOMAN GIRL

TV ESTABLISHMENT!





"It was not like anything you have ever seen on television because it takes existing characters and twists them. Some of it was down and dirty [but] it was always funny."

—Markie Post,
ElectraWoman

looks like bed time. "I was a little bit of a troublemaker with purposely being a little bit of a troublemaker."

For Markie Post, being the new ElectraWoman "Was nothing but a dream. I actually didn't know the original ELECTRAWOMAN AND DYNAGIRL, [but] so many kids that are in that town just told me about it. It was a chance to play a character who was really down and out, and that would have been the series, the cynical but still capable hero, which was a treat to play. It was so much fun because usually I'm kind of a chatter, perky person [laughs]."

Of co-star Anne Sladman she enthuses: "She's a dream. She's so sweet, so willing. She'll make a fool of herself like I will [laughs]. Everybody was great, and I loved working with Marly [Koff]. He's so funny."

Post believes the project might have gone to series had a pilot been produced. "They wanted to make a full length pilot on the budget of a presentation, which might have been a mistake because they weren't able to do the quality production they wanted. I hate the idea of presentations, frankly, because you have to tell a story. [TV executives] say 'Oh no, we don't need a story, we just need scenes.' I don't believe it. [The production team] tried to do as much of the story as they could and ended up having to cut out a whole bunch of stuff they filmed. Warner Bros. said 'We're not going to watch that long, we just aren't.' I guess they don't have the patience. There was so much actual character stuff gone because they had to trim. They had to leave out all the stuff that spontaneously happened between Anne and I. [Also,] I felt like they had to cut corners on production, which I don't think helped the project very much. A lot of the things that you have to do in Canada are never going to be the same; you don't have the time to work on it, you have to communicate by phone before you go up there. It's hard. [Had the project gone to series, it likely would have been shot in America.] I think they should shoot the whole thing over again and do it right because it really is a great idea! [laughs]."

She concluded: "I think Warner Bros. was a little afraid of it. It was not like anything you have ever seen on television because it does take existing characters and twist them. Some of it was down and dirty [but] it was always funny. I think they wanted to soften it so, network like to do."

Can ElectraWoman and DynaGirl prevail against the entertainment establishment [electra pins and needles]? Stay tuned.



Clockwise: The Electracar needs a good washing. Elise Gell (writer, exec-producer), Markie Post, Jeff Kline (costar, exec-producer), and Ann Stedman (Dynagirl) check out the nice electro-weather. Debra Hill and Judy Strangis from the original series. Markie Post poses with creator Marty Krofft.



A black and white photograph of actress Michelle Yeoh. She is wearing a dark, sleeveless top and is holding a handgun with both hands, pointing it towards the camera. Her expression is serious and focused. The background is dark and out of focus.

MYTHICAL FORCE

appealing to audiences the world over, actress Michelle Yeoh's production company Mythical Films proves she has THE TOUCH.

Interview by Craig Reid

In a male-dominated society, where women are considered to be submissive, meal-preparing, child-bearing, sexual objects, Hong Kong action film ironically depicts the female as fearless, overbearing, edgier, and a character force to be reckoned with.

And what better woman in the Hong Kong-ette film community to play the quasi-brooding lead swordswoman Yu Shu Lien in *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*, than arguably the greatest actress/swordswoman in the Hong Kong film industry, Michelle Yeoh. In *CROUCHING TIGER*, Yeoh portrays her alter-ego with just enough vulnerability that she doesn't threaten the very fabric of the chauvinistic Chinese society, yet she still oozes enough atypical qualities that she is viewed as any man's equal. I was able to speak to Yeoh as she reflected on the film, what's next (and why she turned down *THE MATRIX*).

"Back in 1995, I was the first person Ang Lee approached actor-wise," Yeoh said. "I was on a publicity tour for my Bond movie (*TOMORROW NEVER DIES*) and he was just starting up *RIDE WITH THE DEVIL*. So he came to me saying that he wanted to do a *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* with martial arts and that I would be perfect to be in that movie. I have always admired Ang's work, particularly how he handles his actresses and how he is very sensitive to his feminine cast and I thought I really wanted to do more than just action. And particularly with this genre of film, I believe that he would find the balance, that it wouldn't just be action for action sake and that it would be drama-driven. And I was right, thank God.

"The most important thing is that you just want to be in that particular film, and you must believe in the director and the story he's telling. So me, it's more important to be working with people who are passion-

ate rather than just being in a big-budgeted film. I will never leave my roots or say something like, "Well you know, I'm doing Hollywood films and that's it. I'm saying say bye-bye to Chinese movies." What's very dear to me is that I want to make movies with Chinese talent and Chinese themes, and to either have joint East-West producers working together or an Asian production, and do things we can be proud of."

Yeoh's first film under the banner of Mythical Films is the \$20 million budgeted *THE TOUCH*, a story about a Chinese family of circus acrobats, led by Yeoh, who are searching for a stolen mystical artifact. The film also stars Ben Chaplin as Yeoh's love interest. Other names mentioned for Chaplin's role were Hugh Jackman, David Duchovny, Ewan McGregor and Jason Reno. And it will be directed by Peter Pau, the Oscar-winning cinematographer from *CROUCHING TIGER*, who also was the director of photography for *BRIDE OF CHUCKLE*, *BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR*, and John Woo's *THE KILLER*. Philip Kwok, the fight choreographer for Yeoh's Bond film *TOMORROW NEVER DIES* and the recent French blockbuster *MOTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF*, will be doing the fight training in place of Tuen Woo-fing who is busy doing *MATRIX 2* and *3* in Australia.

Born as Yang Yi Chang in Ipoh, a small mining town in West Malaysia, Yeoh grew up speaking English and Malay before Chinese. As a teenager, she moved to England and studied ballet and acting at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. She recalls, "It had always been part of my ambition to be a ballerina then, eventually a ballet teacher and start my own school back in Malaysia. I actually started doing ballet at age four, and all along I knew I would go to England because for me, at that time, the Royal Academy of Dance was the ultimate place to go, so I ended up there. For your British readers and if they are interested, I'm a Liverpool football fan (she giggles) because the first year I spent there was in Chester, and Liverpool was closer for us."

What ever happened to that dream? "Well," she laments, "never really had the chance. After I graduated, I was offered an opportunity to do a commercial in Hong Kong and straight after that, I was offered a film contract. I thought I was young, and it was rare that an opportunity like that comes every day. I figured if I try it and don't like it, it really didn't think it would get with me. I already had my degree and supporting elements that would have helped me go back to Malaysia and start my own school anyway. So I thought 'let's give filmmaking a shot.' Obviously, I enjoy and am still loving it."

Returning home in 1983, she became Miss Malaysia and Miss Meoiba in Melbourne, Australia. That commercial she talked about that started her career was



with Jackie Chan which after an would turn into something cinematically special. During a stint of D&B films she was known as Michelle Yeoh. In her first film, *QWY VS BUNDO* (1985) she plays a subdued, shrinking violet character but later that year, Sammo Hung cast her in the female cop buddy film, *YES MADAM*. Her cop guise continued in *ROYAL WARRIORS* (1986) before being cast as Huo Ming Mang in the Indiana Jones yarn, *MAGNIFICENT WARRIORS* (1987). This film is a definite wow. After the non-action *EASY MONEY* (1988), Yeoh married D&B's founder Jackson Poon. He encouraged her to retire and three years later, they were divorced.

When Stanley Tong directed Jackie Chan's *SUPERCOP* (1991), he did it with the condition that the world's best stuntman and stuntwomen worked together,



Yeoh's return opposite Chan was magnificently engaging. After reprising her cop role in *PROJECT S* (1992), her next efforts with Hong Kong's outrageous action director, Cheng Si Tung, *BUTTERFLY AND SWORD*, *HEROIC TRIO* and its sequel *THE EXECUTIONERS* (all 1993), gave her characters a more mythical dimension. Her next vehicle, *HOLY WEAPON* (1993) was an off-centered fant-Asia farce. She next starred in Tuen Woo Ping's *THE SAI CHI MASTER* (1993) and *WING CHUN* (1994), the first time Woo Ping cast a female as his lead fighter and character. Prior to *TOMORROW NEVER DIES*, she did Ching's *WONDER 2* (1994) and Sammo Hung's *ALI KHAM* (*THE STUNTWOMAN*) (1996), a film dedicated to her as she suffered her most serious injuries to date.

I would like to note that in *BUTTERFLY &*



"I don't believe in
my own peace o

SWORD, a film you must see—similar to CROUCHING TIGER that features a sword fight atop a bamboo forest's canopy, Michelle wows the audience with her own version of a freestyle fight. And in essence it is much better too.

And in keeping with her tough stunt-woman facade, CROUCHING TIGER was no different: as injuries once again plagued her. So what happened? "Well, I just landed wrong," she giggles. "Accidents really happen when you do these kind of action sequences, and you've seen the action sequences we do. They're long. One second you're on a wire and the next you're not. It actually occurred during the very last action sequence of the film. I tore my ACL. We were working late nights, it was 3:30 a.m., the last day of after ten days of non-stop fighting. Plus the mind, the ground was uneven, who knows. It wasn't even a difficult moment, but all of us were just stunned."

She continues, "Apart from the language and character, the physical aspects due to having to get back into it after the injury, was the biggest challenge. It was actually pretty devastated."



As a Bond Girl in TOMORROW NEVER DIES (with Pierce Brosnan), Yeoh was able to show off her more glamorous side.

"I was back in Baltimore for three and-a-half weeks and then returned to shooting. I needed that time to make sure everything was set and the two screws and the new ligament were in the right place and after that it was just pure pain, hell and rehab. It was traumatic but it also builds character. It makes you learn perseverance. I wasn't ready to pack it in and say 'I'm hurt guys. Sorry I'm not coming back.' You feel the responsibility that everyone is on the edge saying 'Oh my God, what are we going to do now? How the hell are we going to replace Michelle?'"

It's ironic that after the first fight, which was laced with wire gags, the rest of the film for her had very little wire work to do. She replies, "That's rather astute of you because it would have been actually easier to keep on doing wire stunts. As you know

fighting...I do martial arts for f mind and health...."

being suspended in air takes pressure off the knee."

Unless the wire snaps or you get dropped. For the most part, Hong Kong film can't afford to use CGI to paint out the wires used in these aerial gags, so they use very thin piano wire and paint them different colors to match the lighting. But as you expect, without warning, they will stretch and snap.

"That's true," she groans. "But because you are in the air, you have less impact things going on. I actually enjoy doing wire work. Also, with wire work, it's not about you doing what you can do, but it's about timing, sometimes pure luck and the different elements, like these five guys pulling you on one side and the person you are fighting with and everything coming together at the right moment."

"But I knew that when I first got involved in this film that the whole physical side of things would be challenging, but I was prepared for it because I'm training of the time and I've done my fair share of 'wu xia pian' movies (fantasy films that feature highly stylized martial art and swordfight action). So in actuality, I was really focusing and spending a lot of my research and preparation time in gearing up for the dramatic side of things. As for the action side, so long as you are accurate and you know the style of what you have to perform on film, then there is basically no rehearsal, you get in, you are told what to do and you do it. It was a terrible accident in so much that after the injury and returned to set, then both sides became just a challenge on the other. I mean now with the physical side, I had to get back into shape for the final fight yet still focus on the dramatic aspects of my character."

And speaking of martial arts training: although she diligently practices martial arts for film, she hasn't had formal training. To be a complete martial artist one must understand the philosophical and spiritual sides. Has Yeoh ever felt deprived of those aspects of the art? She joyfully tells, "Oh no, that's the side that attracts me most. In the beginning, it was the physical side, getting it out on screen, making sure it looks right and the power and energy is there. You might initially get into it because visually it's stimulating or when you see someone do it, it's powerful and you want to be part of that. But once you get into martial arts, it's the philosophy behind it that makes it work. I don't believe in fighting, it's one thing that I stay away from. I do martial arts for my own peace of mind and health, and I'm physically and mentally in tune with my own body. Spiritually, it can become very religious and that's when meditation comes in and you can get in touch with your spiritual side. It's a sense of discovery and understanding."

At the Academy Awards, Roger Ebert applauded Michelle's performance because according to him, she doesn't speak Chinese. To paraphrase Homer Simpson, "D'oh." (It would be nice if these "experts" would do their research.) Yeoh speaks Cantonese and Mandarin but her Mandarin does sound pretty weird. When I ask her about that she gives me the "D'oh," saying, "Most of the critics here don't speak Chinese or know Chinese film. [sings down high] Did it show? [laughs] Well, I don't read Chinese. It was a great challenge in that sense. But you



know, I had my dialogue coach and Ang with me, who is such a perfectionist and who would just grill me until I got it right. It was first about understanding, then digesting, then pure memorizing and being accurate. And oh no, I was hoping it didn't show. My character lived outside of Beijing and so I didn't need a Beijing accent."

"Each province has their very own strong accents. When we first started the movie, Cheng Pei Pei [Jade Fox] was going to have her accent and Chang Chen [he played Lo, Zhang Jiyi's love interest] was going to have his accent and the person would have that accent. And in the end, nobody could understand what they were saying. Forget about us, [hysterical laughter] even the crew from Beijing thought this was all weird."

Although most fans of martial arts films have seen CROUCHING TIGER, if you haven't, shame on you, but it's always interesting to get the actress's perspectives on their character and how they relate to them. So in keeping with that spirit Yeoh shares, "I really had to put in a lot of research and work to get this character going. The film is set in the Qing Dynasty. Yu Shu Lien is very contained, regal, gracious and in a man's world. In that moment of time, it was rare that a woman would head a big security firm where she shoulders a lot of responsibility and being so respected in the Jiang Hu world [Jiang Hu: Someone who travels around the Chinese world, also loosely considered the "martial art world."]. That's why when she saw the young girl and the young girls say, 'Oh, it's so wonderful that you guys can just ride out and do whatever you want and fight your enemies and blah, blah, blah.' She doesn't stop to think that we have even more stricter rules that we live by and we have so many codes of conduct that got us to where we are today. For me, being and knowing that character is very important. So when I walk onto set in that costume, I'm a woman of that time. I wasn't this contemporary, modern woman who would not understand this kind of love. I mean, you love a man so much but because of the tradition because of the dead fiancée, you can't express your love and for the rest of your life you are basically being a widow. She does reflect a lot on modern day women and men, and I think that's why a lot of people can feel for her."

For those that came in late, directed by Ang Lee, CROUCHING TIGER is a lyrical tale of defiance, duplicity, righteousness and destiny as told through the interwoven lives of two women, Yu Shu Lien (Yeoh) and Jen (Zhang Jiyi), that suffer the torment of



undecleared love and how the theft of a sword known as the Green Destiny brings everything to light.

"The great thing about this genre of films, because you know these movies so well, you accept them and have seen them before. These kind of stories are very close to the Chinese culture, and what I'm most happy about is, that they are

has bitter sweet love...there's still hope, she will still continue and has all these things, and that's such a strength. So for me, this character has meant the most in that way. With other action films I've done, it's not as in depth with the character or scripts, it's easy to get sidetracked by action and drama almost becomes a side dish. Although I admit I totally loved

it's important. Everybody wants to be part of that market, so why not if you have the opportunity to get into it. But the most important thing is to be happy with where you are and you have to be proud of what you do. It's important to work both [Asian and Western markets] but don't forget the side you're from. The good thing now is there are co-productions where Americans recognize talent from here, not just actors, but people behind the camera. It's important to me to have that integrated feeling."

Life is a path filled with rebirths. **CROUCHING TIGER** is an international pseudo-rebirth of Chinese film, and Michelle Yeoh is now finding new life with her film company that greatly stems from her own rebirth as a filmmaker and person.

As it turns out Miramax Films could have had first dibs with Yeoh's **CROUCHING TIGER** but passed on it. So not wanting to let another **CROUCHING TIGER** squeeze through their fingers, Miramax was quick to pick up the American distribution rights before the film barely started shooting.

"The great thing about this genre of films....these kind of stories are very close to Chinese culture."

being embraced by the rest of the world and not just thinking that these genre of films are chop-socky. It's lightweight in that sense but with the dramatic side of this triangle, the high moral codes, the beauty and poetic visual feel of the film, the rest of the world now has the chance to look at it and take it seriously in that way.

"Because of the emotional depth of Shu Lien and dramatic death scene with the love of her life, **CROUCHING TIGER** is my most favorite film I've been in. At that moment the character really blows up to the point where you can see, even at the final moment where she knows he has gone to her she'll turn around and still be that noble character, even down to his final breath. I mean these swordsmen, these heroes, they train for years of their life to attain that final enlightenment and they truly believe that when they attain that, your energy will live on and your spirit is free. So for me in that sense, it's working up to the scene.

"Fortunately, and I touch wood, apart from my granddad, I haven't experienced such a great loss. So to dig into myself, you can't do it superficially, to any film that it has to come from within. And to get to that state, it was exploring within myself. That is what really gets to you, the sense of loss and emptiness, that there's someone so close to you that you've held in your heart for so long. For me, it's not a tragedy in this sense in this film, it

doing the **HEROIC TRIO** film with my good friend Maggie Cheung. They were directed by Ching Siu Tung, a wonderful director with a great eye for action. It's a pity he never really had a good chance in America."

She candidly talks, "The American market is the biggest in the world, so if you prioritize things because it's big then yes,

The Asian release is coming up this summer with the American release supposed to be later this year or early next year, probably depending on its success in Asia. And as it turns out, Yeoh, the producer, the director, and the screenwriters are so sure that this film will be a hit, they have already put together a reported \$30 million and started planning for a sequel. □



Amazon

She became a superstar in a man's world, wrote her autobiography and made the cover of *Playboy* twice. She's Joanie Laurer, who made a name for herself in the WWF as wrestler Chyna. "Chyna was a character I played, but I gave it up because I didn't want to wrestle anymore," said Laurer, who has been into physical fitness since she was fifteen. "Those matches were pretty much scripted, but they are very strenuous and I got injured many times. It's a lifestyle for me. I'll work out for the rest of my life. I love anything that has to do with it."

Laurer first graced the cover of *Playboy* for the November 2000 issue. Her return engagement came with this year's January issue. The ten-page nude layout features her as a warrior princess, complete with weapons and a fantasy set.

"I love feeling strong and having a powerful presence," she said. "Fantasy Amazon women have been around since the beginning of time. When you see somebody like that in the flesh, the confidence and strength demands a very sexy reaction. I've worked very hard on my body and I wanted to show it. The images I've seen in magazines and on television, especially *Playboy*, don't quite show a variety of different types of women. We have a stereotype that most women have to live up to as far as what we have to look like, or what is considered to be sexy. I wanted to change that. I wanted to do *Playboy* because I thought [it] would be the epitome of showing femininity and sexuality. I never realized how successful it would be."

The magazine was Laurer's first brush with nudity. "It was easy," she said. "I was treated like a princess. *Playboy* makes every woman look beautiful. I feel very, very comfortable



JOANIE LAURER, AKA CHYNA OF WWF THREW IN THE TOWEL AND POSED AS THE WARRIOR PRINCESS SHE IS FOR PLAYBOY.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

with my body to bring nude and in that atmosphere—it was tasteful—wasn't on sex for me. If you asked me to get naked at a pool or a party, I wouldn't do it. I'd feel funny, but in that atmosphere, it was very comfortable.

"The warrior princess image was her's idea. He was very adamant about me doing that. I wanted to do something military, or doing different types of sports. But he said that's how he saw me and it was kind of a fantasy character for him. We used a lot of paintings by Louis Royce and books as references. We looked at powerful types of women who were in control of their bodies and their sexuality."

Image Entertainment is distributing *PLAYBOY'S JOANIE LAURER NUDE* on tape and DVD which is a backstage look at the making of her pictorial. The sets include a dungeon,

ruined battlements and a pair of dogs. The set was told was one of the biggest sets that they ever used at *Playboy*. Laurer said, "It took five days to shoot. There was a lot. We had to light every angle and get the dogs to sit quietly. It seems that Murphy's Law takes over when you have a big set like that with tons of lighting and things falling down. Even something as simple as holding up the sword for the front cover took time, because it was so heavy for me to hold. There were a lot of things involved with that set."

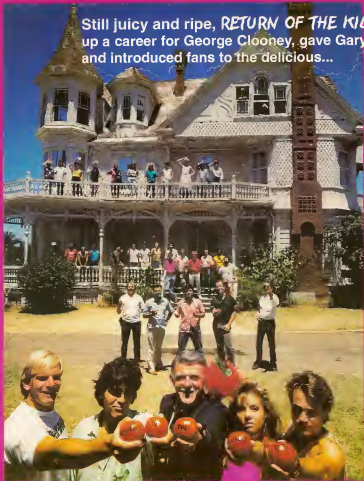
Her post-wrestling days have not been spent solely modeling and hitting the gym. The fame and experience Laurer garnered from the ring has bubbled over into a budding acting career. "I've hit bits of shows—from comedy like *WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?*, *SABRINA*, *THE TEENAGE WITCH*—and every talk show you can think of," she said.

Laurer also had a three-episode arc as Janice on *3RD ROCK FROM THE SUN* and a recent guest appearance on the *REX* episode "Antarctica." "I played a female worker on that," Laurer explained. "It had to do with ancient relics. I was the queen of the Amazons, the leader of a league of women. I found an ancient relic that made me queen of the Amazons. I was an evil warrior. I love doing that action piece because it wasn't like acting it was just getting crazy."

Although her first feature film, the comedy *FRANK MCGURK* will be released this spring, Laurer is not focusing her attention on an acting career. "I like acting," she said, "but my hope is to move into the fitness realm and create fitness products. I have a lot of ideas. I want to stay in the realm of creating fitness videos and showing positive body perception."

Learn more about Queen of the Amazons at her website www.bodybyjoanie.com

Still juicy and ripe, **RETURN OF THE KILLER**
up a career for George Clooney, gave Gary C...
and introduced fans to the delicious...





"Rick Rockwell, who married Darva Conger on *WHO WANTS TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE*, was in the movie...then I found out...Gary Condit was in the movie too! How weird is that? You wonder what scandal is going to come out of our cast next!"



Matal says she and *RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES* co-stars George Clooney and Anthony Starke became very close.

A quick run-downs of Karen Matal's resume might lead one to assume she was just your average doe-eyed pretty girl. However, the assumption would be incorrect. Of course, Matal did participate in her fair share of cheesecake: often sporting bikinis in fun-loving flicks like *ANOTHER CHANCE*, *CANNIBAL WOMEN IN THE AVOCADO JUNGLE OF DEATH* (opposite Shannon Tweed, Adrienne Barbeau, and a pre-POLITICALLY INCORRECT 361 Maher), *KILLING MIDNIGHT*, *THREE SECRETS*, plus TV's *BAW-WATCH*, *BAW-WATCH NIGHTS*, and *CHARLES IN CHARGE*.

Exposing her sexy side has never been a problem for the actress, who began modeling for Eastman-Kodak when she was only sixteen. Unlike many of her co-horts, Matal actually has talent, exemplified with a knack for successfully pulling off comedic roles.

"I'm originally from Rochester, NY, and my dad worked for the Eastman Kodak company," she begins, her eyes large and innocently beautiful. "So I started modeling for [them]. After graduating high school, I came out to San Diego for a photo shoot and ended up falling in love with it and moved out here. I didn't really know how to get started [in the business], so I went the pageant route, which I don't know if I would ever [do again]. It was a different time...it was the 1980s."

Matal is quick to point out that although she wouldn't repeat those initial steps if given the opportunity, her career did receive a hefty boost as a result. "I was Miss California 1982, and [things just started rolling from there. I got a lot of photography work and then commercials. Then I really locked off when VH1 started doing music videos. I did dozens of them. That was my first step into the acting world," she laughs. "My first video was with Michael J. Fox and Julien Lennon for his song 'Slack Around' then I also did music



Matal and Clooney each went on to similar comedies following *RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES*.

at try to do...That's our art. We can walk away and have affected somebody's mood for the entire day."

Matal's doe-eyed appearance and perfect body melded well with her girl-next-door personality and quickly brought her to the attention of Hollywood producers. She spent a season as sexy "Coke Lady" on the FOX comedy *THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BEANBAUTER*. The show lasted only one season, but has gone on to cult status as one of the network's earliest guilty pleasures.

While continuing to top agents' lists for music videos, commercials, and part work, she landed a bit role in the Bruce Greenwood comedy *ANOTHER CHANCE*. "It's become a cult classic. Actually, I think a lot of my movies have become cult classics," she giggles.

It was her second feature, in a lead role, which would ultimately endure her to cult-film fanatics in one of the most atypical and agonizing films of what the 1980s B-movies were all about.

"*RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES* is the one I get asked about the most because it's become such a huge cult classic," she says. "I

think part of its success today is because there were so many great people in it. Like George Clooney. When we shot it we ad-libbed a lot of our own lines and just had a good time with it. I don't think any of us knew how big of a cult movie it was going to become. After that I did another cult classic called CANNIBAL WOMEN IN THE AVOCADO JUNGLE OF DEATH with Bill Maher, Shannon Tweed, Adrienne Barbeau... Bill and I still see each other periodically at a lot of functions around town. I even used to go to M.C. or Host the Bay (an organization that heads which cleans up the Southern California coastal waters from San Francisco to San Diego)—see www.healththebay.com for more info) event last year.

"I've stayed in touch with a lot of those people. Shannon Tweed is married to Gene Simmons (from KISS), and he and my husband do a lot of business in production together. These people keep coming back into [my life]."

She pauses a moment, then reassures she has no ill feelings towards being known as the sexy tomato, well, perhaps there should be some explanation. Metal's character, a beautiful young woman named Tara, "loves to clean, cook [especially toast], and serve men, all while dressed in adorable retro-1950's attire. Now, before the woman's movement starts in, two things should be made clear. First, her character's submissive 1950's era housewife attitude was not portrayed as offerring. Second, she was actually a tomato turned into a human... we had you nah? The plot of RETURN finds Dr. Gangneen (John Aulin of TV's THE ADDAMS FAMILY), creator of the original film's mutant veggies, trying to take over the world once again with tomatoes, only now he's transforming them into human replicants. Metal, and a non-homocidal tomato known as FT. (fuzzy tomato), escape to warn the outer world with the help of George Clooney (THE PERFECT STORM) and Anthony Starke (REPOSSESSED).

"I never know what's going to happen next with KILLER TOMATOES because... aside from George and Anthony—who did some really good stuff—Rick Rockwell, who married Dana Caron on WHO WANTS TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE, was in the movie. Then I found out during the Gary Condit scandal he was in the movie too! So I had to watch it again and if turns out Condit's a customer in one of the early pizza parlor scenes where George is flipping the dough. How weird is that? You wonder what scandal is going to come out of our cast next! So far I'm in the clear, but you never know," she exclaims in a burst of laughter.

Metal found all of her costars to be delightful and maintains the four-week shoot in San Diego, CA was a non-stop party atmosphere. She bonded with Starke and Clooney most, referring to the latter being simply "... amazing! I still think of him as a very dear friend. He was one of those actors who would still be on the set even when he wasn't in a scene. He was so eager to learn and see the whole process. He could've been off relaxing after shooting a scene for two or three hours, but he wanted to be right there. He loves the business that much. He's just incredible and a really good guy."

She was equally impressed with her director and co-star John DeBello, who had unleashed the original KILLER TOMATOES on an unsuspecting national audience in the summer of 1980, with reviewers and audiences alike happily promoting it as "the worst movie ever made!" His approach on the sequel was less AIRPLANE-like parody, more satirical on Hollywood "sex and trendiness." John was a "hook," she guarantees. "This was something he had always wanted to do since he directed ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES. John has that dry sense of humor which comes at you from out of left field



Jungle slaves drag Metal into paddock! George (Metal), who she thinks about every spin!



Metal was protected by her pal Shannon Tweed in the CANNIBAL WOMEN IN THE AVOCADO JUNGLE OF DEATH

You never saw it coming... but it's very intuitive and he knew exactly what he wanted from the very beginning of the project."

DeBello went on to direct two additional sequels, KILLER TOMATOES STRIKE BACK (1990) and KILLER TOMATOES EN FRANCE (1991), but Metal said she was never asked to take part. "RETURN did well theatrically, but it only had a limited release. They also branched out into a really popular cartoon series which, I think for money reasons, they didn't come to any of us to do the voices. However, I do think the character in the cartoon looks on awful lot like me," she says with a snicker.

"It amazes me that regardless of how many other projects I've been in... people always seem to know me most from RETURN and AVOCADO," she laughs, a bit confused. "It's an honor, though. It was such a fun project to do, so I'm really glad people find it totally off-the-wall and appreciate it."

Though CANNIBAL WOMEN IN THE AVOCADO JUNGLE OF DEATH followed up her turn in KILLER TOMATOES, Metal insists her second role as a dirty beach bunny was a complete coincidence. "I just happened to get a movie which was very similar in tone," she shrugs. "One of the producers, Gary Goldstein, went on to do PRETTY WOMAN [1990] right after, which just goes to show you my luck in the draw. So, boy, was my time off these!" She shakes her head and laughs.

The actress quickly played her talent for comedy into a gag as a regular cast member of the sitcom COACHE. As "Sho," Metal was the college roommate to Craig T. Nelson's daughter during the first season. "Craig was so giving," she says. "After each taping he would present his co-stars a rose or some small keepsake like a bracelet with an inscription on it. If you wanted to do another take or had questions he'd be right there for you. He was the sweetest man on earth... and Shelly Fabares was a darling! I loved her to death."

Unfortunately, Metal's time on the COACHE set was only limited to the first season. "Close (Kelly Fox), Coach's daughter, ended up marrying her boyfriend on the show," she explains. "So the next season they ended up living together in the dorms. She no longer needed a college roommate."

Though saddened by leaving the show, Metal quickly moved on to roles in other comedies like THE HOGANS and THE TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone work harder than [Tracey] does. She's such a chameleon. She'd go from one



Karen Miller is the only woman to have her **CANNES** "Wah" happen to her. **THE KILLER** and **SEX & COMPS** are also in the same category. Miller is said to be the only woman to have her "Wah" happen to her.

skit to the next with such a smooth flow, I actually got to work with Paulo Abdul during a choreographing scene for that show, so it was really, really big for me to do."

Her television and modeling careers were still going strong when Metal suddenly opted to take her life down an alternate path to become a wife and mother. She remained active in theater, but concentrating on raising her daughter was more important. She considered introducing her daughter into a similar career path, entering her into the world of modeling and commercial work, but ultimately decided experiencing childhood instead of fame was far more important.

Metal reveals in the mid-90s she found her life in turmoil as her seven-year marriage to a South African tennis player began to crumble. She found strength and new love in Jamie, a producer of *Baywatch*. Ironically, it was around the same time she had re-

turned to the small screen in two episodes of the jiggly beach TV series, and an episode of its spooky spin-off *BAYWATCH NIGHTS*, when their paths crossed, yet it wasn't until after she'd filmed her episodes when they would finally be introduced.

"When things were really down and I didn't think I would ever meet anybody else and tell my life would never be the same, Jamie came into my life from out of the blue," she smiles softly. "I met him through two writer friends at mine. We hit it off, started dating, and were married about eight months later. That was [six] years ago."

With a new firm of support and ready to move further ahead with her career, Metal guest-starred in other TV shows like the sitcom *WING BEHAVING BADLY*, the thriller *KILLING MIDNIGHT* (1997), and the TV movie *THREE SECRETS* (1999). Her memories of *KILLING MIDNIGHT* are surprisingly upbeat, since "I never got paid for it. They said it...I never got a check."

She laughs and shrugs. "From what I understand it's available overseas. SAG keeps looking up on it for me. Mickey Rooney [*BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY* 3] was in it, too. We're still struggling to figure out what happened to it. It's a shame, too. However, I got to work with Mickey Rooney. I've been very lucky to be able to do things like that."

She was beyond thrilled to work with another set of legendary screen actors with her role as an astronaut in the critical and boxoffice hit *SPACE COWBOYS* (2000), an actor who about a group of retired astronauts trying to help save Earth from a pluming Russian satellite. There were two teams of astronauts: the new team and the old one," Metal explains. "I was on the new team. I shot my scenes for about three weeks. Unfortunately, my one dialogue scene was cut, which was really hard for me, but it's my understanding Clint Eastwood [who directed and starred in the film, alongside James Garner, Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Suther-



WANNA
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SOMETHING
THAT'LL
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HAIR
STAND ON END?

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land, and Marcia Goy Harden) shoots a hell of a lot of film. When there's too much, the smaller roles are the first to go. However, I am still in five scenes of the film.

"It was a great time. Clint was very funny and laid back. He knew what he wanted. He would get scenes set up quick: rehearse a couple times, then shoot it and move right on to the next. Clint was really great, and James Garner was a total hoot for me. These were the people who didn't have to give you the time of day if they didn't want to. There were no prima donnas."

Though Karen Mistal and her husband have never had an opportunity to work together, she did manage to work with her father-in-law on her follow-up feature, THE DUKES OF HAZARD reunion TV movie. "My father-in-law is the creator and writer of the original DUKES OF HAZARD," she says, but assures, "I didn't just get [it] handed to me. I had to go in and fight for it." When I went in to the audition at Warner Bros., the casting agents had no idea I was his daughter-in-law until after they hired me. Then I was nervous during the entire shoot, because I'd never worked with my father-in-law before. I was an absolute wreck the whole week before we started shooting. I couldn't eat anything."

She insists, "The cast was great, but I didn't get to work with everybody. I was the L.A. movie and my scene was with Catherine Bach. It was a lot of fun. It wasn't a very long shoot for me, but I really enjoyed it."

Between her on-going film and television roles, plus managing to care for a family, Mistal has also tried to remain close to the theater. She recently wrapped the stage production of DORIAN GRAY, based the ageless classic THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY. She reports, "I played the role of 'Gwen' here in L.A. It's a musical which is going to be performed in N.Y. off-Broadway. Unfortunately I won't be going with to N.Y., because I would have to leave my family behind and I just can't do that."

Is there a specific medium she prefers between theater, TV, and film? "Each has special elements of their own," she assesses. "The most fun for me is theater, because every night is different. You never know what's going to happen, and I don't think anything hones up your craft more than that does—it gives me the charge of energy to go out and do other things. I feel like I'm on fire when I'm up there."

"Some people prefer being on a movie set," she adds, "because they can take their time with learning their characters. For me, though, it's just a lot of waiting around, unless I'm the first scene up. I like things to be moving quickly and more high energy. That's the great thing about doing sitcoms."

Are there any projects Mistal hopes to pursue within the next few years? "I've always wanted to do a horror movie," she confesses. "A really good one. I have ghost stories, like THE OTHERS and WHAT LIES BENEATH. I've never done one. It might be good to have something like that follow you around, like Linda Blair did with THE EXORCIST. Now that was a great movie."

Even if she should never find something along the caliber of THE EXORCIST for which she would forever be known, she insists she could do worse than RETURN OF THE KILLER TOWA-TOES. "As an actress, I wish I'd had something a little more validated, but RETURN is just what happened for me. That's how my life worked out. There are some choices I could have made early on, but I opted for love and wanted to raise a family instead. What's amazing is that I've always been able to find work right back into the business."

The enduring appeal continues to catch the actress off-guard. After fourteen years and frequent appearances on Comedy Central, the fan-base for RETURN continues to expand. One thing which keeps it popular is the title. "Mistal believes. It's so unique. Plus, the plot is so wacky. It's basically about whoever comes up with the craziest most out-there concept and gets it to the finish line first. John DeBello definitely did that. It was one of those things where you just throw it to the wind and are amazed at where it turns up. It ended up being a pretty cool thing in the long run." □



COMBINING ACTION AND A SEXY PAMELA ANDERSON TAKES CHARGE HER 15 MINUTES OF FAME I

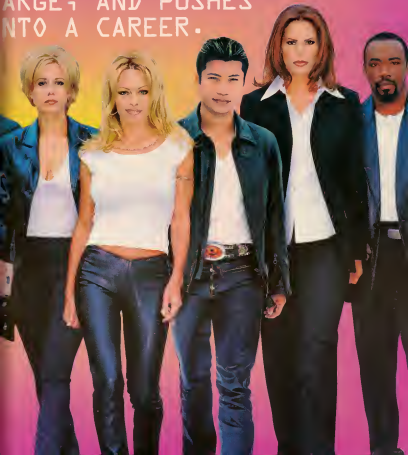
BY CRAIG REID

the women of VIP

VIP is in its fourth season for Columbia TriStar, and continues to astonish worldwide. Pam Anderson stars alongside guest stars like Raitano, Molly Culver, Leah Lail, Angele Brooks, and Nguyen, and Susan Baker. This is one attractive cast with a twist—they're all really good actors. Since its 1998 debut, Anderson has managed to bring the show's ratings to the top of its designated time slot, with rumors now circulating it could make the regular prime-time. Anderson plays "Volery Irons," the head of an elite bodyguard agency in Hollywood...who hates guns. Don't take this show too seriously—it's an hour filled with klanish fun and slapstick humor. It's CHARLIE'S ANGELS meets the THREE STOOGES. You can watch as "Volery Irons" encounters her evil



EXY SENSE OF HUMOR,
ARGE, AND PUSHES
NTO A CAREER.





twin, and fighting a Ninja warrior. Blending action and humor, the bad guys often take a backseat to a shoe sale of Macy's. It's the only show where you can see a former *Playboy* playmate, catching crooks completely by accident, dressed to kill in Gucci and other designer duds, wearing sky-high platform shoes, and driving a Viper.

Taking the advice of her *BAYWATCH* boss, David Hasselhoff, Anderson became the executive producer of VIP, originally titled *FASHION FORCE 2000*. As executive producer, Pam gets to book the guests she wants, pick out the wardrobe, and make any of the other decisions which have helped the action-comedy rise to the top of the syndicated heap.

Leah Lai plays the educated and brassy "Kay," Angelle Brooks is the spiritual and sassy "Maxine," Natalie Raitano is the brawny "Hiko," while Molly Culver is the vixen "Tasha Daxler," who actually pulls off all the heroics for which Val takes the credit. Let's not forget the other two members of



Fighting crime with fashion, Culver, in creative...

Culver, who declined an interview, got her start as a model in Australia before landing bit roles in films and commercials in America.

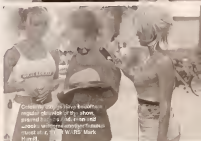


Shaun Baker (with Anderson and Brooks) was the original male hero of the series. (Brooks' "Maxine" has been with the series since the beginning, but has more recently gained more prominence, and action, in explicit heroics.)



the VIP team, Guslin Nguyen as martial artist and Hong Kong movie star "Johnny Loh," and Shaun Baker as ex-boxer turned martial artist and weapons expert, "Quick Williams."

Molly Culver grew up a tomboy, with a grandmother who is a full-blooded Native American—Chickasaw and Chickasaw. Two years into college, an agent told her she could become a model and found herself in Australia for six months followed by a five year stint as a model in Paris and New York. She made the jump into acting, landing bit roles until she was cast in VIP, her first major series. Shaun Baker, a native New Yorker, graduated from New York's "Forme" school, the High School for the Performing Arts. After gaining experience on stage in New York, he moved to Los Angeles and has appeared in shows like *NYPD BLUE*, *MARTIN* and *CHICAGO HOPE*.



Occasionally, as Janyse Jaud's regular character of the show, gained her own life, mind and looks, Williams' character must stay in the WARD Mark Harris.

For more VIP action, check out the show's official website at vipactiontv.com □

VIP ANGELLE BROOKS

HER ROLE AS MAXINE, THE WISE ORACLE, BROUGHT BACK THIS TALENTED ACTRESS' CONFIDENCE.

BY CRAIG REID



How appropriate is it that a beautiful lady who has found enlightenment through helping others in the City of Angels, is named Angelle. One can only assume that fate was taking its course when Angelle Brooks found light through religion, and spread that beam of hope to prison inmates leading to her own discovery that a direction in acting was good for her own soul. But this end results happy beginning has come at an unexpected price for Angelle, a price that people who want to chase their dreams shouldn't have to pay, but they do

so only because of their passion for what they're doing. It's a price created by jealousy of others and families who don't understand that the reason for having a child is not about making a clone of oneself, but to create a free-thinking individual that can blossom and grow with a different light and in a new direction.

Born and raised in Los Angeles with no family connection with show business, Brooks, the youngest of four children was left by the acting in all of places, church. She recalls, "It was

while doing a Christian play. I was at UCLA where I was studying to be a doctor but still didn't know what specialty I wanted. My mom was a general practitioner, my father in geriatrics, my sister into surgery, and so there was the expectation."

She giggles. "Actually it was bio-chemistry that sent me flying away. It was so hard that it made up my mind for me. I didn't have the heart or the passion for it and thought that I've got to find something else, so I got stuck with sociology. But then I didn't like that and began teaching aerobics to just make some money and decide what I really wanted to do. So I was asked to do a play at church and that's when I fell in love with acting. Travelling around with my church's drama ministry to high schools, penitentiaries and detention centers excited and inspired me more than anything. I came to enjoy the positive impact my talent could have on people."

On the surface, her story seems so simple, but in reality much more was going on. "It was really tough. My family was against [pursuing a career in acting.] In fact, I was working at a private hospital for the mentally disabled, and actually continued to work there while I was trying to do auditions. Then I was busted. Someone told one of the health inspectors that one of the social workers was an actress and sneaking off to do auditions. They informed the administrators and was given the choice that I had to give up the acting or I'd have to go."

When I tell her that her story reminded me of someone else I had previously interviewed, Michael Clark Duncan, she burst out laughing. "Michael? I know him. He was working at Kinkos and one day when he was making a Xerox copy of my résumé, he asked if I'd be interested in having him be my trainer. We were both broke at the time and I couldn't even afford to pay him, and he also didn't have a car so we met at the gym. It's so cool and when we see each other now he'll say, 'Man, we were just so busted, remember the day?' I remember about how broke we were just sitting around eating Ritz crackers and peanut butter. But you know, it's all about reflecting and showing that if you work hard and keep at it, you can go up the ladder."

And, of course, Duncan did, starting in films such as *ARMAGEDDON* and *PLANET OF THE APES*, as well as receiving an Academy award for best supporting actor in *THE GREEN MILE*.

She continues explaining that she just kept plugging away until she got a chance to do a pilot. Then all hell broke. "I had booked this pilot called *DIVAS*. I mat my mom at home. I remember walking into the kitchen and she was standing, holding a bag full of groceries, and when I told her, her mouth dropped open and she dropped [the groceries] all over the floor. It was kind of funny, she stumbled backwards, sat on the stool with her mouth hanging wide open. She could n't believe that I had booked a job because it was an open casting call in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York and hundreds of girls were going out for at these parts. I was talked into it by some friends of mine, I went for and got the part. And to this day I still consider it my biggest personal win because it required singing and I'm not a singer but I still got the job, so to me that was huge."

Following acting, singing and dancing lessons, Brooks has appeared in many stage plays, movies and television series running the gamut of African-American shows such as *FRESH*, *PRINCE OF BEL-AIR*, *THE JAMIE FOXX SHOW* and *THE WAKANS*.



BROS. She had recurring roles in CBS's *THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS*, *MALCOLM & EDIE* and has appeared in other shows such as *NYPD BLUE*, *HANGIN' WITH MR. COOPER* and a memorable role as Martin Lawrence's ex-girlfriend on *MARTIN*. And during her recent hiatus from VIP the guest starred on HBO's *ARREST* for the second time. Her feature film experience includes roles in *RTUAL*, *LAST EXIT TO EARTH* and *BOOK OF LOVE*. What's curious though, is that her gig on *GI-WAS* is not listed on any of her biographies or an VIP's production notes. You see, although it was her big break it was also the start of her nightmares.

She sadly relates, "One girl on the show accused me of sleeping with the director and executive producers because she said since I couldn't sing, how else could I get the job? [She didn't want to give out the actress's name] She was also very mean to me when I was working on the show and I've really tried to block that all out. I was just totally none back then."

Unfortunately these sort of stories run rampant in Hollywood, just look at any of the tabloids. "In the beginning, I'd just cry and feel bad. I didn't say anything or stand up for myself. Nowadays I don't have any problem expressing myself and handling people who say horrible things like that. But at the time it makes you feel less worthy, like I wasn't talented enough and that I didn't deserve the job and that affected me years



"I don't see any u
community. I see mo

due to the cascading effects of the DIVAS union, she had to go on unemployment.

"I eventually booked a co-star part on the FRESH PRINCE OF BEL-AIR, then MARTIN, and soon after that, MALCOLM & EDDIE. I was moving along, but on square wheels. I got a part on THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS but again things got tough. MALCOLM & EDDIE didn't renew my character hence my conflict with them and THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS earned me and renegotiated on their three year contract with me. William Bell, the show's executive producer said that he just couldn't live with my speaking voice so decided to not give me the three year contract."

Brooks continues, "I will never work for that asshole again, and I don't mind you putting that in writing. So I was out of work for thirteen months. Just as I had about enough of it, my girlfriend called me up and I was lying to just hold on, but then I just started crying and sobbing over the phone, screaming, 'I give up. I quit. I'm moving to Maryland to be with my sister and become a nurse. Four weeks later, I booked VIP.'"

As it also turned out, the stars and executive producer of MALCOLM & EDDIE spread horrible things about Brooks which led to her being blackballed in the industry. "It's the sort of thing you never read about in TV Guide, because everything is always supposed to be fine in the entertainment world, and that there is a strong sense of brotherhood amongst the African-American entertainment community. I've been covering this sort of stuff for years, and the sense of brotherhood is as surface as it is in the Asian, Latino and most of the other ethnic groups represented in entertainment. But having said that, are groups plodding along because in the end good people eventually meet good people, and it's those people you want to work with."

Brooks adds, "I don't see any unity amongst the African-American film community, there are of course examples where there is support, but I see mostly people who don't help each other out."

After a continued discussion on ethnic stereotypes in film and TV, it's time to bring the subject back to a more positive and lighter note, VIP. So how did it all come about?

"VIP came about from just a regular audition. I was going out like crazy, doing a lot of auditions. I was actually up for Dharma's best friend in DHARMA AND GREGG. It was down to me and the Italian girl. So I saw about VIP and had planned that it would be my last try because I had decided that was it. So I gave it my all, went in and created a wild character but I wasn't trying to please anybody just go wild. It was my decision, and I thought they'd either take it or leave it because this is how I saw the character."

"Well, apparently it was something they liked and it fit, and it was whittled down to just a few of us. I went back, and Pamela was in the room watching the audition. I created this character again that was different from the other three girls. They were all dressed in black, looking hip and cool, but I was wearing fluorescent green, polyester bellbottom pants."

down the line because I always thought if I book a job people will think that again, and that it's not about acting talent. I was really worried about what people thought."

"I either make up my mind and get over it or I starve to death. I know I couldn't work in an office, that would be torture for me and I also realize that I could never be a doctor, so I just got over it. Oh, and incidentally, I can sing now."

"As soon as I got hired for the role, [director/writer] Tom Carter called me up and told if this pilot gets picked up you will be fired. We will take you out of the lead role and we will write in a separate part for you and it won't be the series lead because you can't sing and besides, SONY doesn't like your voice. SONY wanted to take the group around and actually have them sing live performances and put out an album and market them as a singing group. You wonder why actresses have hangups, because when you start up, everybody gives them to you and from there you either succumb to them, fail and starve or you get over it. To me, religion really helped, prayer works wonders and I had a lot of divine intervention."

DIVAS was not the "godsend" she had hoped for. At the time she booked the show, it was during the first year she was working at the hospital. She recalls calling the administrators telling them that she would be away for four weeks and that she didn't think she'd be back hoping to go on to bigger and better things. She ended up working at the hospital for three years until she was rattled out by someone snitching to her boss that she was an actress. After being fired and things going so slow

Anderson takes stars she grew up watching, like Erik Estrada (left) and invites them to guest star on her show.



nity amongst the African-American film stly people who don't help each other out."

"I didn't look hip at all! I didn't want my character to be like that. It was perfect for VIP. My concept and vision was something I prayed about and I believe that God gave me that. It's just my belief and as it turned out, it was perfect for the show, and it's the way that we dress my character now, the colors, the wild hair look and that is 'Maxine de la Cruz,' a black Latina. I gave it my all. What's funny is that Pamela didn't like the fact that I wore the same outfit for each of the four auditions, mentioning that it was the only thing she didn't like about the audition. I was like, 'Really? I was always told to wear the same outfit to each audition.' But it all worked out."

In the series, Brooks plays Valery, tons-down-to-earth best friend, Maxine, the oracle or sage of the show. She says, "Every heroine needs the oracle to give her advice. With Valery joining the VIP team and entering their glamorous and dangerous world, Maxine keeps her grounded. Valery blows off steam and Maxine gives her good advice. She's also creative and feisty."

Brooks says that whenever an actor created a character they always meld a little bit of themselves in with the character and from whatever they see out on the street, from their friends, family, and people in the news. "We steal everything from what we see. So for Maxine, she's a combination of me and a girlfriend of mine from Guatemala, our personalities, quirks and idiosyncrasies. Although the writers have made her a little sex starved, and she's constantly throwing herself at the men," she laughs, "I would like to add for the record that was not my idea. Apparently, they noticed that I like to joke around a lot and flirt and so they picked that up and augmented it and added it into Maxine. We have a T-shirt that Pam made for all of us that says, 'Perverts and Bastards' because on the set, it's the way things are."

On the subject of nudity, Brooks's answer is predictable, "I refuse to do it, and I won't do it." To her, it's a personal and religious choice contending that nudity doesn't enhance a film citing that some of the best films ever made, were made at a time when nudity and graphic sexiness wasn't allowed. She shares, "I was just watching ALL ABOUT EVE (1950, which starred Bette Davis, Anne Baxter and Marilyn Monroe) and the sex was all implied and the audience got it. The writing and acting was incredible and it just shows you that you don't need the nudity. I think audiences are smarter than that, but today's film makers are second guessing the audience. Things don't need to be spelled out because then you have to keep going further and further to titillate the audience because they've seen it all. Some actresses can pull it off easily and others don't. I don't."

When Angele is not waiting on VIP, you might find her talking with youth groups and middle schools about acting, or indulging in her new passions: real-estate investment and cooking. "I'm a horrible cook," she banters. "And just made my first baked chicken and black bean soup. I'm enjoying learning about how to cook."

I asked if she still performs in local jails. She sighs. "I tried to get a group

together but I just can't get anybody yet. I haven't given up. I think actors are so caught up in themselves and getting their careers together and making money and being successful and don't take time out to think about people who are incarcerated or children who are at detention centers who need help. We also discussed about accessibility before, that actors portray characters who appear likable and that fans love those characters and expect the star to be like that. We aren't accessible because you've got to be smart and unfortunately there is a lot of weird people out there and you can't open yourself up to everybody, and one has to guard yourself, and there is a really nothing wrong with that. But you know, it's really all about confidence."

When you work in the industry, you quickly realize that VIP

is a show that glorifies the image of the glamour and fast-paced life of Hollywood, Beverly Hills and trendy Los Angeles is indeed just a show. The harsh reality is that each actor has a story to tell a story that is not always pretty, a story that most refuse to talk about for fear of hurting that pseudo-image, the fact that Brooks was able to open up and share so much with *Maxine Fatales* is a measure of her confidence that many years ago, she felt was lacking. She is not only a VIP, but could quite possibly be the show's MVP. □





Vi

AS NIKKI FRA
TOUGH-AS-N

NATALIE RAITANO

CO, EXPLOSIVES AND AMMUNITIONS EXPERT, THIS
AIDS ACTRESS REALLY SHINES.

INTERVIEW BY CRAIG REID



"Acting was never something I wanted to do," the rooted Natalie Raitano blurts, "but I've always known that I wanted to be a star."

If serendipity was a prerequisite for becoming a TV personality, then Raitano possesses that shadowy virtue. Her path is the sort of story that gives hope to all those young starlets who cross the boundaries between smalltown America, into the hallowed highways of Hollywood, where the elusive Route 66 melts into the cryptic yellow brick road that leads to the green Emerald City. A green that is not only the color of money, but also the color of envy. But in many instances it's really the aid

adage that rules: If you look for something too hard, you will never find it. The key is to have that something find you, and that is how Raitano's acting career began.

She's been in Los Angeles for eleven years after moving from Charleroi, Pennsylvania. "I came out because I wanted to pursue a singing career, but I accidentally bumped into acting. Basically, I wanted something exciting that fulfilled my passion. I explored dance and hip-hop but really wanted to sing. Within a few weeks, I hooked up with a few girls and we formed a singing group."

As she pursued her passion, Raitano subsidized her living working as a waitress, florist and aerobic teacher saying, "I did the whole survival gig."

It was during one of her training sessions that a client asked her to meet with a TV producer, the creator and executive producer of *VP*. "I met with J.F. Lawton and he thought I would be great for the part in his new TV show. So I went in, met with Pamela, and I got the part in the pilot. Once they filmed the pilot though, they said that they were not going to use me. They knew I wasn't an actress. I was, of course, very disappointed because I had such a good time, and Pam and I clicked immediately. But, on the other hand, I understood, so I just let it go."

But as serendipity would have it, oppor-

tunity was about to knock twice. Lawton called her back a month later telling her there was another opportunity for her to be on the show and if she might be interested in pursuing it. She said, "Hell, yeah!"

Raitano plays Nikko Franica, whose expertise with guns, fast cars and explosives lends extra muscle when the VIP agency has to protect the rich and famous from danger. Raitano elaborates, "Nikko is basically one of the bodyguards and is a street-tough girl from a family of mobsters who went straight," she says, "her father was a cop and a very good man, while her grandfather was a Don. Although she's a rebel, there is a reason why she becomes good. As a kid, she got into trouble and was given the choice of either going to jail or joining the Army. So, Nikko joined the Army where she excelled in weaponry, driving and explosives. [Thus the butch look and hair]. She came out straight but in the meantime, her father had died so there is a lot of stuff about her family on the show."

What's interesting here, and perhaps a reflection of her acting experience, is that actors deep into their roles often explain their characters in the first person, a true personification of the self, where new or inexperienced actors will describe their character in the third person as if they haven't fully embodied the caricature of who they are or are not. However, after pressing the subject she admits, "Well, she is sort of like my alter ego, so in that way, I relate to her a lot because I'm tough on the outside but I'm definitely soft inside. I always have the protective wall up just like Nikko does." A pause later she muses, "I'm

not into guns or explosives, but I do like the fact that we as women have the power over the bad guys, even if it's only on TV."

Fitness fans will recall that the live wire Italian (it's a term we like to use to describe those bubbly, hip, step and jumper sort of TV aerobic folks) hosted the HIP HOP BODY SHOP which ran on cable's ESPN 2 three years ago. Her father owns a paper products company and her mother, like Natalie herself, is active in the Special Olympics.

"My sister Nicole, but we call her Nicky, has Downs Syndrome and we also talk on the phone a lot. She's really great. She works at my father's company and is also a dancer. She visits me out here and is delighted that my name on the show is 'Nikki.' I also do a lot of work for the Special Olympics. I did that stuff up in Alaska [most recent International Special Olympics]."

In a show with live women, one thing VIP has steered away from is for any romantic involvements. The closest thing to a relationship or mild sexual tension is between Natalie and male lead Durell Nigsun, Katano adds. "Well, true. He is sort of my love interest on the show, but nothing has really happened between us. They do like to keep the tension there, but we don't want that to get in the way of our work and so they never let the relationship develop any further. If we do get closer, it's probably going to happen if they are going to finish the show. But in fact, we kissed this year and I will admit I was so nervous. I couldn't kiss him because we are really that close on the set, and I felt it was like losing my brothers. It was weird, but then again, you have got to be an actress, suck it up and go for it."

Her only other notable TV guest appearances were THE HOWARD STERN SHOW and the last four episodes of MARTIAL LAW. In fact, that's where we met, but also she did not remember me. But then as now, her single most eye-catching trait is her extremely short hair.

"I'm kind of letting my hair grow to give it a different look since we have a long hiatus [they just finished two seasons back to back]. There are pros and cons with the

hair. One of the advantages is that there are not many people with very short hair like mine, so it makes you stand out. But on the other hand, you also get info that one particular look unless you are going to wear wigs."

In terms of the choreographed fight sequences she is called upon to deliver, she doesn't do any special martial art training but has found that her background as a trained dancer helped the most. "It just really reminded me of doing dance choreography," she elucidates, "and so I find it easy to pick up the fights. It's pretty simple stuff and we keep it more street [fighting] instead of like karate. I don't practice karate, no time for that sort of commitment. It's really a way of life and I don't want to start change it so to speak. But I guess, in a sense, I try to do martial arts of the mind. It also work with a meditation coach because I'm so busy in life and find myself really scattered trying to do too many things at once. I have to just stop and breathe and it ultimately helps keep me centered. You know, it's very easy to get lost in the business being on a TV show. Your life does change and you have got to remain grounded."

Although Katano doesn't see nudity in

her path, she is not closed to the idea of doing that if it was important for the film or something tasteful, she'd be open to it. But the one thing that bothers her about the industry is how people will try to get close to her to get close to Pam.

"In that respect, it can be hard to trust people because Pamela and I are such good friends, everybody tries to get to me to get to Pam and that is the thing that I found myself getting caught up in so many times. There are a lot of things we did together that are a lot of fun, but then there are things that don't work out and so you learn from your mistakes. So they will call me because of her, and I'm like, 'I don't know if you know, but I'm not her agent.'"

"But I will say that this show is an incredible experience. I really love this show, and we truly have become one big family. Unless you've been on a show like that, it's hard to imagine what that's like. The challenge is just the long hours but we get the weekend off. In the beginning, me being someone who has never acted before and learning to do that overnight, I just learned as I went along. Now I feel much better about it and more comfortable. I was scared at first but now I'm happy." □



"Pamela and I are such good friends, everybody tries to get to me to get to Pam."

VIP

DUSTIN NGUYEN

PLAYING VIP'S JOHNNY LOH—A STUNTMAN WHO ESCAPED THE HONG KONG MOB—THIS ACTOR IS ENJOYING THE RIDE.

INTERVIEW BY CRAIG REND

Dustin Nguyen has overcome enormous odds to become a successful actor.

Born in South Vietnam to one of the country's top male film and stage actors, Nguyen and his family fled Vietnam the day Saigon fell in 1975, and spent several weeks at sea on a boat with nearly 1,000 others. After a stop over in Guam, the family was moved to a refugee camp in Arkansas, with a Methodist church then subsidizing their move to St. Louis.

Having shined in such series as *21 JUMP STREET* and *SEAQUEST: DSV*, he started out playing a Cambodian freedom fighter in a two-part episode of *MAGNUM P.I.* in 1980, entitled "Joe," undoubtedly a reflective American mindset of the time in regards to our country's changing attitudes towards the Vietnam War.

Asked about the perceived stereotypes of Vietnamese as perpetuated in American film and TV, Nguyen said, "Vietnamese-Americans are the smallest of all the Asian ethnic groups in Hollywood because of not being in the country that long. As a result, what the average American person may identify with is a reflection of the war, and to answer the question directly, most Vietnamese in American film are portrayed as Viet Congs that hide in the bush, wear straw hats—a faceless enemy."

"When I arrived here, the wounds of the war were still fresh in this country, so inevitably that was the stigma I had to deal with coming and growing up in America, but surprisingly, shutting off in the entertainment industry I have never felt that the image of that Vietnamese person has affected me or my ability to work in the business. It did exist,

I was oblivious to it. The only film I played a Vietnamese in was *HEAVEN AND EARTH*. On *21 JUMP STREET*, my character was conceived as a Japanese-American Detective Harry Lokki, but two seasons into the show, they did a special episode where they actually changed me over to Vietnamese."

"I have tried to steer away from the broken English roles because, as you know, not all Asian-Americans speak with an accent. It's no problem if an actor does that role, I just try not to. I'm truly thankful that during those times, I was in a position where I had no family to support or strapped financially because if so I might not have had the luxury to turn things down. The bottom line is it's about survival and having to make a living."

After his *MAGNUM P.I.* role, he went on to appear in other TV shows enjoyed enormous popularity as Sule on *GENERAL HOSPITAL*. He also found success in feature films playing that pivotal role in *HEAVEN AND EARTH* and tapped into his martial art abilities in films like *3 NINJAS KICK BACK* and Brandon Lee's *RAPID FIRE*. As it turns out, it was Dustin's martial art abilities that in a round-a-bout way led to his role on *VIP*.

He elaborates, "I was doing a campaign for Levi's, a European commercial I'd never done one before, but over there, their commercials are really elaborate. They were doing a series where they were featuring a hero of some kind, sort of like Buddy Lee here. It was the first time they had used an Asian-American, and it was a tribute to the '70s kung-fu movies, so it was all martial arts and action. It was also the first time I got to do fights and I choreographed it. It cost \$2 million and was shot in nine days. A luxury."

"Up to that point, I was not identified in

the industry as doing martial arts because of the dramatic roles I've done, so after the studio saw it, I landed a development deal with Touchstone to develop an hour action show for myself and shoot a three million dollar pilot. It didn't get on the air. It was called *JOHNNY X*, an Aaron James Bond. After the deal, of that time, Touchstone wanted to be in business with me and met with various people but couldn't come up with anything. They said they had this show on the air called *VIP*, so how about if I did a guest appearance?"

His character is Johnny Loh, a stuntman and actor who ran afoul of the Hong Kong mob and escaped to Los Angeles. As it turned out, the show he appeared on had good ratings and there was a great chemistry between Nguyen and Italiaano. So he was asked back onto the show as a new character. And what about this chemistry?

"Well, being the former action star, Nick is a fan of my Hong Kong films, so when I came to L.A. to hide out because I was framed for a murder which was my first appearance on *VIP*, she recognized me from my movies and so there is this attraction and the writers would then toy with this idea and have the sexual tension, but we realize that we shouldn't do anything about having a relation, at least not just yet."

"Some may say that because my character on *VIP* does martial arts that it's a stereotype. But one of my personal passions in life is motorcycle racing and in *VIP* I got to ride cool bikes, dress like a rock star, romance Natalie and it's just a fun, comedic show. I can't think of a lot of roles for an Asian leading man that has those qualities." □



very delightful, smart, funny and thoughtful talk about someone who has had some rough times! She is always in a good mood and nice to people and she's an inspiration to me. She is out there, you like her or you don't! People forget she has two kids and one of them will throw up in the car on the way to the set. She's just a woman trying to raise kids, and doing a good job at it."

"The greatest challenge I have on the show as an actor is the absolute boredom and having to prevent myself from going crazy because a lot of this job is all about hurry up then wait. So I got to the set at 5 a.m., rush through makeup, rush through all the hair styling, and then sit there all day until they are ready to do the stuff. I rarely get to do action because all of my stuff is all 'ready.' And another thing, I often don't know what I'm talking about, so I need to make it come across real, and do it at the

even in this show, I don't see it as a break and in reality, there is no one show or film that I'm most known for. I've been doing *VP* for three years and I'm not really known for it. So it's just something else along the way."

"However, I would add I will admit that I am proud of my work in *LATE LAST NIGHT*, an independent film that I did with Emilio Echeverri, because for me it was a departure from what I normally do. I play the city stepper. Most people know me as the educated sort of character so people don't have me play that bimbo thing. It's a beautiful movie and it's about exploration of a relationship that has gone on for a long time, and about a man who was soul searching."

"[In *VP*] they talk about what a nerd I am. But if you dress me sexy, va-va-vo voom. I didn't even know what a pushup bra was until I got the role. When they were outfitting me, they said that I had a great body under

of you now, what the heck happened to you?" [laughs] Of course we are thinner at seventeen compared to forty-seven, but then again," she giggles, "I still have a lot of time left to park out."

Although her three passions are music, food and books, things that she's enthusiastic to share with you about, she's an avid ice hockey fan and also a bit of an Anglophile.

"Give me a free day and you'll find me curled in a corner reading, playing the piano, then cooking and eating a lovely meal. In fact, I just finished a great book yesterday, *How to be Good* by Nick Hornby, on funny English weather. It's a dark, fascinating look at a couple living in London during a mid-life crisis and the husband is the angry guy who comes across as this healer who pours energy of people. Ultimately, the message is positive."



The *VP* team includes (left to right) Justin Nguyen, Leah Lail, Sherry Silver, Hank Kingsley, and Emily Culver.

"...To me, every job is a big break. I'm totally thankful for every job I get."

drop of a dime because I rarely get the chance to do more than two takes. So when I get to go outside for my character, that's fun. So this season for example, one of the writers heard me singing and so he wrote an episode for me where I get to sing in a scene. And just as I'm about to go crazy with all the inside stuff, they'll write an episode where I get to do a light, then after that I'm happy to be back behind the desk."

"While some TV critics purport that her breakthrough role was as Hank Kingsley's wife on HBO's *THE LARRY SANDERS SHOW* and others say it's her crack addict character on an Emmy-nominated episode of *ER*, Lail disagrees with them all.

"I'm really make of a character actor so to me every job is a big break. I'm totally blessed and thankful for every job I get. So

there and they were going to show it off. I'm like, 'Really?' Because I have granny grant kind of clothes. So in that sense—the clothing and my look—*VP* is fun for me."

So what about nudity? "Well," she snickers, "I've done the briefest of brief in a film called *DENIAL* with Patrick Dempsey. To be honest, I have nothing against it if it's right for the story. Actually, I wish I had done some when I was younger so I could have that on tape and could have seen how pretty I used to be."

She quips, "Women are constantly with issue of what they look like, you don't see it in hindsight. I mean, I look at pictures of my grandmother and say, 'Hey grandma, you were really hot.' It's more about documentation on film so I can show my grandkids one day and they can say 'Grandma look

"I studied the calla as a kid and recently bought one, so now I have some time since we just had two seasons back to back and I'd like to take lessons."

Right now, Lail is very content with her life and her work on *VP* sharing, "To be able to do twenty-two episodes a season, keeping it fresh and developing an on-fire life for a character is a challenge. I've been lucky in my career as an actress. I've not had to work as much as other people or worked on such high profile gigs as many others, but I've worked with good people and those people have hired me again. And I don't get the jobs from those that are looking for those who want the 'model' or the 'right thing' look. I'm like, 'You want to work with me? Here I am.' I think it has worked very well for me."

shannon elizabeth

THIS DOWN-HOME GIRL FROM TEXAS TACKLES MORE THAN INJURIES AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE HIT VIDEO/DVD
13 GHOSTS. BY CHUCK WAGNER

Tell 'em and flashing a high-wattage smile, Shannon Elizabeth sahoys into the room and takes a seat. There is a silent pause, as the room drinks in her grace and beauty.

"This is my first horror film," Said Elizabeth, referring to 13 GHOSTS, a film about a financially strapped family that inherits a house with glass walls and many Macabrean secrets. In one scene, Shannon's character shares a bathroom with a naked ghost she can't see—and who even bathes in blood directly below her.

Elizabeth's sole brush with horror was in the spoof SCARY MOVIE. Why 13 GHOSTS?

"A bunch of things drew me to that movie. She's more like me than any character I'd done. She's a normal girl in college, who pulls her hair back and doesn't wear makeup, but wears jeans—it wasn't a big character stretch. The fact that it was Joel Silver and Robert Zemeckis making the project and that it was a genre that I hadn't done. Working with great actors like Tony Shalhoub was part of it. I knew the special effects would be amazing. All the pieces just fit."

13 GHOSTS is the second film from Dark Castle Entertainment—the company formed by Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis and Gilbert Adler in part to remake the classic B-movies of William Castle in an A-movie way. The first film was 2000's hit, HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL.

Elizabeth says: "I made sure it wouldn't be anything like [HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL] when I agreed to do the film. I didn't care for the clichés in that film. I think it's stupid any time anybody [says], 'Oh, let me go check out the noise in the dark room by myself.' It's stupid. I didn't want to do a screamer—I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER—that's not what I was looking to do."

Unlike a lot of effects films, 13 GHOSTS used real actors—heavily made up—as the ghosts. Although there were still some

scenes which couldn't be done physically, such as one where Elizabeth—head and helpless—had to imagine that sharp wheels wheeled about her.

"Most of the stuff was there," she says. "As far as, like, the wheels that were spinning around us, we had pictures to study. There were really good storyboards of what that was going to look like. We didn't have to imagine it too much. We were shown by director, Steve Beck, what it was going to be like. And all the ghosts were there. So even if we were acting with them not being there, we knew what they looked like."

Elizabeth admits that private fears can help establish a mood when acting. "I get scared going in a house after dark and being by myself. Hearing the creaks and things. I don't like that. But I always thank you for stuff you know to rates like this. I was scared when I went home at night after filming, this because I was going home to a dark apartment and I was staying by myself. It did scare me making this."

And it was painful in one sequence, Elizabeth's character lies back onto the floor backwards down the hall, and then a host—ed up and attacked with slashing fingernails by a ghost with a cage on its head.

"Yeah!" she chirps. "I've got some bruises. I had pads on my back and [my] head and was in a harness for part of that shot. For a couple of shots they had a stunt guy, but I wanted to do as much as I could. When stunt doubles do something, sometimes you can tell, 'ah, it's not her!' Anything they would let me do, insurance-wise, I wanted to do."

Since the ghosts were physically present on set, it made for a different feeling than if they'd been absent, effects to be added in later.

"They had really hard to keep everything looking real. Keep the blood looking wet. I felt sorry for them. Even just having a little bit of blood on me was hard. It's gross, it's sticky,

your hair gets caught in it, and you can't put on clothes over it. The ghost was in head-to-toe makeup most of the time. It was also disgusting when the rat baby ghost was throwing up all over herself. We're like 'What is that?' And I think they said, 'Cat meal and beans!'"

And the ghost known as The Angry Pinworm, who was covered with slashes and nicks? One that makeup or a body suit?

"She was naked!" Elizabeth confirms. "Cooch, she was naked! She's a dancer in Vancouver [named Shanna Loyer], so they found someone who was okay with the nudity. There were moments when she had on a G-string with makeup over it. I don't know if she always had it on. I don't even remember. Beyond that, she was naked. But they were always making sure she was comfortable, and they'd cover her up between takes."

Judging from previous photo exposés, Elizabeth isn't too offended about nudity, though she did grow up in Waco, Texas under what is sometimes called "the Baptist Bubble."

"It was a shock, but a good shock," Elizabeth says of leaving Waco and becoming a successful model in New York. "I didn't grow up Baptist. I felt so sheltered and limited in Waco. There was just nothing there. If you wanted to go shopping, you had to drive to Dallas. If you wanted to see a good movie, you had to go to Austin. It was great to be able to go out and experience something bigger and different and faster-paced. I'm more that speed. I like being in New York and LA so much more, just because you can always get what you need nearby. The traffic's bad, but I've kind of gotten used to and accepted that. Like LA, because it's mad like what I grew up with as far as having a neighborhood and a house and a car. I like the faster pace. I get bored easily if I'm not doing something all the time."





FROM AFRICA TO METROPOLIS!

JUNGLE GIRL
PHYLLIS COATES REIGNED SUPREME
DURING HOLLYWOOD'S GOLDEN ERA.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI



After two blockbuster serials in an era where the traditional Saturday Matinee chapter plays were being quickly supplanted by television, the rights to the character of Superman were picked up by a low-budget film production company. The first effort was a 47-minute feature *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN* released by Ruppert in 1951. Actor George Reeves was cast as the Man of Steel and Phyllis Coates as the irrepressible Lois Lane.

Arriving in California in 1943, Coates hoped to enter UCLA, but a two credit language deficit precluded those plans. At the time, her mother was a waitress at the Melody Lane Restaurant near Hollywood and Vine, the crossroads of the



film community. Fortunately, right around the corner was the El Capitan Theater where veteran actor Ken Murray was keeping the vestiges of old time vaudeville alive with his black-out show. One day while Coates was sitting at the Melody Lane counter having lunch, Murray walked into the restaurant and sat next to her. They struck up a conversation and Murray suggested that if the young woman ever needed a job she should come and see him.

"I had no idea about show business," said Coates. "so I did go around and see him because they paid a lot more money at that time than what I could have gotten elsewhere. I was scared to death, but I did get the job and that was my first job as a chorus girl at the El Capitan Theater."

After working in several theatrical productions, Coates signed a contract with Warner Bros in 1948. The publicity department and photographers immediately went to work to promote the new starlet. "Those pictures were called cheese, coke in those days where you pose with your legs hanging out and your teeth hanging out and your boobs are pushed up."



Coates said.

She was cast as a cigarette girl who works at a gambling house called Club Bermuda in *SMART GIRLS DON'T TALK*. The film starred Virginia Mayo and Bruce Bennett and was directed by Richard L. Bare. Coates and Bare were later married, but it didn't take and seven months later they called it off. Bare was the producer-director of a series of short comedies featuring a Sad Sack character named "Joe McDoakes." Coates replaced Jane Harker who was originally featured alongside star George O'Hanlon. Coates' first assignment on the unit was "So You Want to Be in Politics" which was released in October 1948. "I had a stock contract at Warner Bros. and they put me in those," Coates recalled. "George O'Hanlon was a very talented guy and a good writer. He helped Dick Bare write a lot of the things. A very funny guy. I got along great with George. Anything low budget was done at a very

the westerns," said Coates. "When I went to the interview he asked me 'Well, do you ride?' and I said 'I'm from Texas,' and never did say if I did or not. I was not a rider. We got out on location at the old Iverson's Ranch. The wranglers were great old western guys who managed the horses and took care of everything. They got me up on the horse and they had all the lights set up with the reflectors. You shot and printed everything at Monogram. The important thing was the cowboy's hat and horses, to hell with the leading lady. I couldn't get the horse going. I was kind of coaching it in the saddle trying to get it going and this old wrangler said 'Kick him in the gut.' I didn't realize I had spurs on and I let that horse have it and away we went. It was the widest ride. God, I knocked reflectors over and it was very obvious I knew nothing about horses. I worked on the lines and my performance on whatever western it was, but I turned in the best performance of my life convincing

Vince that I could act and to hell with the riding. Those western guys were great. I remember being in wagons with a team of six horses going, it seemed like ninety miles per hour and those guys would be in the back under the wagons driving those horses but it looked like I did. The horses knew more about the clappers and action than I did. When they heard those clappers and the director yell 'Action!' they headed right toward the camera."

Coates rode the range with such western stars as Allan Rocky Lane, Johnny Mack Brown and Whip Wilson. She also appeared with Wild Bill Elliott in four pictures, *TOPEKA*, *THE MAVERICK*, *LONGHORN* and *FARGO*. "Bill was a great guy and a cowboy when he wasn't shooting a western," she said. "I used to shoot five of them back to back. We made a whole film in five days. When Bill wasn't shooting a film, he was out rodeoing. I don't know how old he was, but he was no spring chicken. He modeled himself after William S. Hart. Bill was a little stiff as an actor, but he kept himself in great shape."

"Johnny Mack Brown was the sweetest man I ever worked with. He was a big sweet, tub of blubber. Rocky Lane was a good cowboy as I remember. Whip Wilson drove me insane. He didn't have anything going except that damn whip. He was awful to work with. I'm surprised I even remember his name." Paying your dues, even at Monogram, meant appearing in at least one of the wacky Bowery Boys films. Lea Gorcey and Huntz Hall extended their film careers another twelve years as Slop and Sach, the leaders of the oldest "boys" gang in films. Despite the wild derring-do series gets today, there were 45 entries before the unit was shuttered in 1950. In *BLUES BUSTERS* (1950), in which Sach miraculously gets a beautiful singing voice, Coates plays Slop's girlfriend, Sally Dallas. She even gets to do a tap dancing routine. "They were great," said Coates about the boys. "We shot over at the old Monogram Studio. Even Adele Jergens (who was cast as Lola Stanton), a big fat blonde. I loved them. They were crazy, always doing funny things. But they treated us right and proper."

Between jobs, Coates heard that they were casting for a new film about Superman and decided to go for the audition. "Everyone in Hollywood who needed a job was on the interview for *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLEMEN*," she said. "Producer Bob Maxwell [who also wrote the screenplay under the name Richard Heffling] selected me. I don't know why. He just said 'You fit the bill bud.'"

The actress had never met George Reeves prior to working on the film. The actor had been relegated to B-film after the war and had just started in the title role of Columbia's serial *THE ADVENTURES OF SIR GALAHAD*. "George and I met each other over a drink in his dressing room," Coates said. "He said



Wild Bill Elliott, Rocky Lane and George O'Hanlon in *SO YOU WANT TO BE A COWBOY*.

quick pace. They were all pretty hysterical to work on because they were so crazy and outlandish. You could take any subject in the world and say 'So You Want to...' I learned a lot about comedy from Dick Bare and George O'Hanlon."

She went on to appear in almost twenty shorts including *SO YOU WANT TO BE A COWBOY*, *SO YOU WANT TO BUY A USED CAR*, *SO YOU WANT TO WEAR PANTS* and finally, the last film in the series *SO YOUR WIFE WANTS TO WORK* released in July 1956.

No soap opera character could compare to the family problems Coates faced on a daily basis. Confronted with a severely mentally ill mother, an alcoholic grandmother and a handicapped daughter, Coates desperately had to work. No matter where—Jobs on television and the independent studios offered the most opportunity at the time. During her trials at the Poverty Row studios, Coates worked with many of the B-western stars over at Monogram Pictures home of the Bowery Boys. "Vincent Fennelly was the producer at Monogram on



PHYLLIS COATES FILMOGRAPHY

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|------|
| Lots and Clark (TV series) | 1995 | Man From Sonora | 1951 |
| Mrs. Lambert Remembers Love | 1991 | Nevada Badmen | 1951 |
| Goodnight, Sweet Marilyn | 1989 | Oklahoma Justice | 1951 |
| Kiss Shot | 1989 | Sage to Blue River | 1951 |
| Whisper Kills | 1988 | The Sun was Setting | 1951 |
| The Baby Maker | 1970 | Superman and the Mole Men | 1951 |
| The Claw Monsters | 1966 | Blues Busters | 1950 |
| U-238 and the Witch Doctor | 1966 | My Blue Heaven | 1950 |
| Incredible Petrified World | 1959 | Outlaws of Texas | 1950 |
| This Is Alice (TV series) | 1958 | The House Across the Street | 1949 |
| Blood Arrow | 1958 | A Kiss in the Dark | 1949 |
| Cattle Empire | 1958 | My Foolish Heart | 1949 |
| Chicago Confidential | 1957 | Smart Girls Don't Talk | 1948 |
| I Was a Teenage Frankenstein | 1957 | | |
| Girls in Prison | 1956 | THE JOE MCDOAKES SERIES | |
| Panther Girl of the Congo | 1955 | So You Want To Be in Politics? | 1948 |
| The Duke (TV series) | 1954 | So You Want to Be a Muscleman? | 1949 |
| Gunfighters of the Northwest | 1954 | So You're Having In-Law Trouble? | 1949 |
| El Paso Stampede | 1953 | So You Want to Hold Your Husband? | 1950 |
| Here Come the Girls | 1953 | So You Want to Be a Cowboy? | 1951 |
| Jungle Drums of Africa | 1953 | So You Want to Buy a Used Car? | 1951 |
| Marshal of Cedar Rock | 1953 | So You Want to Be a Bachelor? | 1951 |
| Perils of the Jungle | 1953 | So You Want to Be a Plumber? | 1951 |
| She's Back on Broadway | 1953 | So You Want to Get It Wholesale? | 1952 |
| Adventures of Superman (TV series) | 1952 | So You're Going to a Convention? | 1952 |
| Canyon Ambush | 1952 | So You Want to Wear the Pants? | 1952 |
| Fargo | 1952 | So You Want a Television Set? | 1953 |
| Flat Top | 1952 | So You Love Your Dog? | 1953 |
| The Gunman | 1952 | So You Think You Can't Sleep? | 1953 |
| Invasion, U.S.A. | 1952 | So You Want to Be an Heir? | 1953 |
| The Maverick | 1952 | So You're Having Neighbor Trouble? | 1954 |
| Wyoming Roundup | 1952 | So You Want to Be Pretty? | 1956 |
| Canyon Raiders | 1951 | So You Want to Play the Piano? | 1956 |
| The Longhorn | 1951 | So Your Wife Wants to Work? | 1956 |

"Here babe. Here's to the bottom of the barrel." I was grateful for the job and, I think, so was he because he came back from the service and the whole game had changed for him. He had worked at Selznick on GONE WITH THE WIND. We became very, very good friends while I worked with him. I became good friends with his lady at the time, Toni Mannix. Toni was a very wealthy woman married to Eddie Mannix, the production manager at MGM. Their love affair wasn't the best kept secret in Hollywood.

"George and I got along great. He was very loving and generous to me and gave me billing with him. He did not do that for Noel Hall. I never asked for it. My agent never asked for it. Somebody pointed it out to me one day. 'Hey you've got billing with George.'"

Having labored in other 8 units, Coates was surprised when they moved on to the Selznick lot. "We had dressing rooms bigger than some people's apartments," she exclaimed, "because there was oil that left over from GONE WITH THE WIND and other big pictures. Big old sound stages. We shot so fast that we would be filming on one set while they were building the set for the next shot right next to us. We knew it was going to be a TV series. At that time actors frowned on TV. We started shortly after the feature working on the series."

An amusing incident Coates never tired of telling occurs at the opening to the oil well shaft that has penetrated the subterranean domain of the Moie People. "I was standing on this platform with Superman and some of the Hollywood little people and they have this weapon. They've come up out of the ground with the weapon. George looked at it and he said to me, 'Now don't laugh. Take a

look at that thing. That's an Electrolux vacuum cleaner.' I looked at it and sure enough it was. I had one. It was a tank type. We roared. That's the kind of budget we had. I had the funny long skirt on and these funny shoes, I had one suit and I think two hats and a double, in case I got egg or something on it."

Thomas Carr and Lee Sholem, two veteran western directors that Coates had worked with took turns handling the reins on the first season of THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN. "I said to someone once that if I had known Superman was going to go on so long I would have learned my lines," joked Coates. "George had a photographic mind and I'm a fast study. That's why we could do most of our stuff in one take. Seldom did we get a second take unless George insisted on it. Tommy Carr and Lee Sholem knew how to set it up and hit the mark. Shoot and print. It was fast."

"I got knocked out on the Superman series one time when Lee Sholem was directing. The heavies were coming at me like crazy. I missed my mark by about three inches. That was a nice thing that I missed my mark, and the guy threw a punch and landed right on my chin and knocked me out. Lee said 'Get her over to her dressing room and revive her before the swelling starts and lets finish the shot.' They brought me back, a little dazed, and we finished the shot then I got to go home. Lee kept the shot in the film."

After shooting the feature and twenty-four episodes of the show, Coates left the series in 1953 to try another television show. Unfortunately, the pilot failed and it was back to Poverty Row.

She turned up at Republic co-starring with one of that studio's top cowboy stars, Allan Rocky Lane in EL PASO STAMPEDE and MARSHAL OF CEDAR CREEK. There she also made the



lent of her three series, JUNGLE DRUMS OF AFRICA. As Dr. Carol Bryant, the daughter of a medical missionary, Coates and costar Clayton Moore, TV's Lone Ranger, fight a group of foreign agents trying to get control of a vast deposit of jungle uranium. Coates had first met Moore when he made her first television appearance in "The Schoolmarm," an episode of THE LONE RANGER show in 1949.

Guns boffer rage throughout every chapter. During one encounter, Coates got an unwelcome surprise. "Most of the natives on JUNGLE DRUMS were jazz musicians," said Coates. "Including Roy Glenn, who played Nagano, the head jungle guy. They'd be playing a gig at night until four or five o'clock in the morning and come on the set by 7:30. No sleep and that sort of thing. We were all firing and shooting at the natives and one of the friendly natives was right up by me shooting. He fired a hot lead in my left ear and I was deaf for a while. But you went on. In those days it was a different thing. Nobody quit or threatened to sue. The business was different. Everyone did their thing and helped everybody else. We used to move props even out of the old Selbick Studio before Desi Arnaz and Lucy bought it. You'd just grab a prop and move it."

By 1955, the senos were on the way out. Universal had packed it in years ago and Co-

"CARRADINE WAS STANDING BY THE FIREPLACE...TOTALLY NAKED. I NEVER SAW A PENIS ON A MAN AS LARGE AS THIS. YOU COULD NOT TELL HIS TWO LEGS FROM HIS PRIVATE PARTS."

lumbia was firing

their releases with stock footage. Republic Pictures which was more at home on the range than in jungles, produced the last of only a handful of serials set in the jungle, PANTHER GIRL OF THE JUNGLE, directed by Franklin Adreon, was almost the last of the serials to come out of the studio. Coates is jungle girl Jean Evans, a wildlife photographer for the International Foundation. Nicknamed the Panther Girl by the local natives after having slain one of the beasts, Evans encounters giant crochish which are harassing the natives. She and her friend, big game hunter Larry Sanders, played by Myron Healey, eventually discover that Dr. Morgan, a renegade scientist, is using experimental hormone drugs to enlarge normal crochish to huge proportions to tighten the natives away in order to operate an illegal diamond mine.

To match stock footage from Republic's 1941 serial, JUNGLE GIRL, Coates was dressed in a home spun outfit with short skirt and a leopard print belt. "I was dressed to match Frances Gifford's wardrobe," said Coates.

During the twelve chapters, Coates is attacked by one of the monsters, plunged into a quicksand filled swamp, fed up and knocked into the harbor of a jungle settlement, menaced by a gorilla and sinks beneath the waters of a lagoon when her boat capsizes. "We had to get into terrible water" she remembered. "They had this lake on the lot that was disease infested. Every time we'd get out of the lake we would have to have a shot of penicillin. It was awful. I can see Myron Healey and I dragging around in that muddy water. Actors wouldn't do that today. I was shot at, beat up, imprisoned, thrown in quicksand."

In 1957, Coates found herself at another low budget studio, but this was one of the new breed that had sprung up in the mid Fifties. American International had hit on an emerging market which would have a major impact on the film industry. Teenagers. Producers Samuel I. Arkoff and James H. Nicholson had hit on cinematic gold when they discovered the combination of teenagers and cars. Vexia, the drive in double feature aimed at the kids, following up on the success of the studio's I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF, they produced I WAS A

TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN starring Whit Bissell as the latest crazy descendant of the infamous mad doctor. Coates was cast as Professor Frankenstein's fiancée, Margaret. Suspicious of her lover's strange experiments in the locked basement laboratory, Margaret secretly makes a duplicate key and goes to investigate, with horrible consequences. "They fed me to the alligator," laughed Coates. "We shot that at a studio off Santa Monica Boulevard which was that the old Eagle Linn Studio, I believe. Gary Conway, the kid who played the monster was pretty nice. What was he a perfect gentleman, was wonderful to work with. A sweet man. What was a little stiff. That makes up for it. They did have a real alligator on the set as I recall. He was over in a tank. What cut me up and fed me to the alligator. Anything for your craft. Any thing for a buck! You can see I've been through the mill."

Although she seldom visited the realm of science fiction, Coates did have a nodding acquaintance. Beade Hearnup with the Man of Steel, in INVASION U.S.A. (1952) Coates was Mrs. Mulvory, the wife of a rancher who disputes the government's agricultural policies until the Commies blow the hell out of the good old US of A. She appeared as Karen Sheldon in "Baron of Silence" an episode of TV's SCIENCE FICTION THEATRE, an anthology series hosted by Truman Bradley. After I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN Coates made the dreadful IN-CREDIBLE PETRIFIED WORLD which was released on a double bill with TEENAGE ZOMBIES. These low-

budget productions were produced and directed

by Jerry Warren. "I had been a girlfriend of Jerry's when I was sixteen, working at the Black-outs," said Coates. "Then I lost touch with Jerry. He called me one day and asked 'For old times sake would you help me? I'm trying to get started. Would you appear in a movie I'm making? It's a low budget film and my father-in-law is going to play the monster. I have a soft heart and he and his wife were trying to get started in the business, so I said okay."

The actress was soon in New Mexico's Colossal Cave playing Dale Marshall, a reporter covering the death of a new diving bell invented by Dr. Wyman, played by John Carradine. When things go awry, the passengers find themselves in a strange underwater cavern complete with air supply. "We ended up out of state in a cave full of bat guano," she remembered. "I told Jerry I didn't want to do this type of thing anymore. I was sick of it and I was worried that if I came up for another job someone might say, 'Oh you did that crap.' He said 'No, no, no. It will never, never play on the west coast. Of course it did and I was up for something at Columbia and I lost it because of that. It was terrible. I learned a lesson about doing friends a favor. His father-in-law was a nice man but didn't know anything about acting and his wife was sweet but she didn't know anything about producing. But I did like Bob Clarke. It was a treat working with that nutty Carradine. You never knew what to expect. A lovely guy. Bob and John Carradine were the only two paid actors on that film."

The veteran actor would unexpectedly turn up again, this time in Coates' Beverly Hills home. "I was living up on North Beverly Drive at the time and the girl who stood in for me on SUPERMAN was Della Jacques, a cute tiny little Mexican. I just loved Della and I loved her family. They were very poor. Every time she made want for her two daughters and mother and father. Della was a good heavy drinker from the old SUPERMAN series. That's what got me out of the series, the booze.



Della sort of had full run of my house. She had met John Carradine. I was out doing something and it was late at night when I came home. Della was on the couch and Carradine was standing by the fireplace with his arm on the mantle totally naked. I never saw a penis on a man as large as this. You could not tell his two legs from his private parts. It was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen and he was quoting Shakespeare. He and Della had this little romp. I never worked with anybody quite like John Carradine. This was the skinniest man I was just shocked. If I had my will about me I would have photographed him. John was a fine actor and his kids are fine actors."

Leaving the screen in the early '60s, Coates would only make occasional television appearances. When Superman once again flew on television screens in **LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN**, Coates was asked to make a cameo appearance on a 1993 episode "The House of Luthor" playing Lane's mother. "That came about because I think they just wanted to get publicity out of it," said Coates. "I went back and made some appearances with Ten Hölcher in New York. She was a great Lois Lane. Everything was different. The budget was a lot bigger. It was like a different world. It was nothing like the way we shot."

Her trip to New York was heart-rending. Family problems took a dreadful turn as Coates was preparing to leave for her New York appearance. "I have a son who is a heroine addict," the actress said. "The morning that the limo picked me up here in Monterey to take me to the airport, I had just gotten a call from the police department that they had picked up my son and he was dead. He had hit four or five cars while drinking and on heroin. They took him to the hospital in Salinas and he was pronounced dead. And I had to get on a plane and go to New York. I couldn't find my car with both hands. I was so upset. They revived him at the hospital. The medics had pronounced him dead. The last two years have been absolute hell for me, but I'm learning to let go. I can't control this. I've tried everything and spent thousands of dollars. The money is nothing, it's the emotional strain. My son must have nine lives because he's had the habit for many, many years. It's gotten to the point where I can't permit him in my life. There's nothing I can do about it. That's awful." □



Heather Graham (center) and other cast members in a scene from *The Hot Chick*.

continued from page 7

by Rodd Kershby (THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE) and produced by Aron Shteyn (ROD STEELE 0014), the film stars Marianne Pickardson, Lesley Lindzey, and Jeff Davis. Within a young bride is seduced and abducted by a passionate apprentice, four paranormal experts must confront their own fears and erotic desires to uncover the dark and lurid spirits responsible. The film, due for release in June 2002, will be available in both "R" and "Unrated" versions.

●Heather Graham (AUSTIN POWERS 2), Maria Tami (ON THE BEDROOM), Christine Baranski (ADDAM'S FAMILY VALUES), Jim Mistry, and Michael McKean (THE BRADY BUNCH MOVIE) star in the romantic comedy *THE GURU*. Director Daisy von Scherler Mayer's hilarious movie follows Rama (Mistry), a young Indian dance teacher, embarking for N.Y. in pursuit of love, only to find himself working as a waiter in an Indian restaurant. Through an encounter with Sharona (Graham), an adult film star, Rama is mistaken for a spiritual leader—the Guru of Sex—and becomes an overnight celebrity. Fame comes at a price, however, and Rama must choose between his newfound fame and his growing love for Sharona. The mishap-laden,

based on Urban Media's popular website series, which stars super-hot Denise Richards, Aimee Elia, Dana Chappelle, Chi McBride, Bitty Dee Williams, and Eddie Griffin as the title character. The comedy like on the *Blackout* comic of the 1970's finds Griffin blasted from the past to infiltrate a sinister underground movement headed by The Man. Partnered with the sexy, charming Bitch Girl (Elia), the hero must transform himself from street-wear bad boy to a preppy, penny loafer wearing snobs to infiltrate and take on the evil perpetrators of Operation Whitehead—Mr. Feather (Chris Kattan), White She Devil (Reharse), and, ultimately, The

young less named Seshel. they think she just might be what they need to spice up their act. Playing hard to get, Seshel is a loner, she turns them to Cryptic, a mysterious, sinister club which is beyond anything they've ever imagined. However, all Hell breaks loose when the cops not only discover the sexy ladies are super more than gun and juice, but that one of the girls unintentionally holds the key which could lead to vampire domination on earth. *CRYPTIC* is due out in May 2002.

Indie filmmakers should also take notice *Darkness* is currently seeking independent films to include in their distribution lineup. Shorts, student films, dark comedy, splatter flicks, exploitation. Go to www.dvdriven.com for more details.

●Murder is company policy in *Y&B Entertainment's* new thriller *FIRST DEGREE*. Directed by Stephen Eckelberry from a script by Richmond Raelin and told by superstar Keanu Black, the story unravels at a company where the boss turns up dead, and his employees (including Black, Erica Clarke,



Men. Get ready for action in the sci-fi thriller later this year, ya dig?

●Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Harrison Lloyd (David Strathairn) is missing on assignment and presumed dead in a far-off country in the new drama *HARRISON'S FLOWERS*. Refusing to accept the news, his wife Sarah (Annie MacDonnell) embarks on a perilous journey to find him. Armed with a camera, Sarah enters a world which shocks her to the core. She thought she had known what war was like—but the war is much smaller than the safe harbor of home, as Sarah learns when the harsh realities of the front lines become her world. Elias Koteas and Adrien Brody co-star in the *The Choumou* directed movie.

●*CRYPTIC* is the first of a four picture deal director Danny Driven has created with Full Moon and the newly formed *Darkness* Films. The urban horror-comedy pic, which Driven leads to the 1998 horror favorite *VAMP*, follows would-be rappers trying to get some respect for their music. When they meet a sexy

Kimberly Kates, C. Thomas Howell, James Wilder, and Jack Soles) are all suspects. Go to www.yourentertainment.com for additional info.

●Twelve years after its predecessor hit theaters, *SUNDER PATTY MASSACRE IV* is going into production. According to his interview on www.dvdriven.com (http://blackoutatwoplace.com), Jim Wynorski says he has been given writing and directing duties on the film, which finds a girls swim team lost in the country and menaced by a serial killer. He further explains he plans to merge the splatter franchise with New Concordia's *SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE II* (1992), incorporating the character of "Devil Kitchum" (but a was decision, if you ask us, but then, nobody really did...). Previous plotlines and actors, including Jake Strue and the original film's Brinke Stevens, which have been posted on numerous websites for nearly two years, are not a part of Wynorski's production.

●The remake carnage continues with word of Wes Craven's classic *THE HILLS HAVE EYES* (1977) as the latest victim. No confirmation



Wes Craven's classic *THE HILLS HAVE EYES* (1977) as the latest victim of Hollywood's remake cycle.

on whether or not Craven will have any participation, or how altered the new version will be from the original, which found an all-American nuclear family turned into savage nemeses by a family of cannibals hidden within the California hills.

●Apparently someone decided it was necessary to reap the "acceptable" rewards at 2000's secret society thriller *THE SKULLS*. Except *THE SKULLS II* to hit video store shelves with much smaller fanfare and no returning cast members.

●Though lens and film critics alike are into over word of Michael Bay's *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* remake, word has come out there are also plans to shoot *TCM 5*, starring Linda Blair and scripted by Ganner Hansen. *THE EXORCIST* beauty spoke about the production at a recent film convention, but offered few exact details, except to say she was somehow connected with *Leatherface's* newest clan.

On a sad side note, TCM 4 star Robert Jacko passed away recently. Jacko portrayed Leatherface in the controversial sequel, which gave Matthew McConaughey and Renee Zellweger their first meaty roles. □



Sarah (Annie MacDonnell) embarks on a perilous journey to find her husband Harrison (David Strathairn) in *HARRISON'S FLOWERS*.

cross-country into about the search for the American dreamer warms it's way into theaters this Fall.

●He's back. He's bad, and he's here to rescue us all from The Man. Directed by THE BEST MAN's Malcolm D. Lee, *UNDERCOVER BROTHER* is a live-action comedy



Will Lind. Blair join the carnal clan of *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* in

THE BOOKWALTER CONTROVERSY CONTINUES...

I took great offense at the implications of the so-called "Clockwork Orange" fan in the letters section of the Tammi Sutton issue (FF 114). For him to suggest that someone's enjoyment of the FRIDAY THE 13TH franchise would lead them to be nothing more than gutter-feeding splatter hounds is asinine, as is his assumption these same people would not know of, nor appreciate, films like ROSEMARY'S BABY, REPULSION, and DIA-BOLIQUE.

I have, in fact seen these films multiple times, even breaking down theories behind ROSEMARY'S BABY for my senior thesis. I, as I'm sure many other horror fans, can appreciate the independent talents of filmmakers like J.R. Bookwalter—whose films I have seen—and enjoyed. (I suspect "Clockwork" has not, and is basing his opinion on a general dislike of low-budget features without having actually viewed the material he blasts.)

It seems to me, many of cinema's so-called "true talents" began their careers with minuscule budget flicks like DEMENTIA 13. I also love the film that the cowardly author of that snobbish letter hides behind. Additionally, had he read the article thoroughly, he may have noted Bookwalter wasn't claiming FRIDAY THE 13TH to be a work of art (though aren't all films, just by the definition alone?), merely a guilty pleasure.

"A Clockwork Orange Fan" needs to get off his high horse and stop desecrating the film he hides be-



Sleazier films, like 1960's FRIDAY THE 13TH (top), and multi-layered psychological thrillers such as 1968's ROSEMARY'S BABY (bottom), are members of two very different sub-genres within the horror field, and play to different kinds of scare fans and tastes. Does that mean one has less cinematic value than the other, especially since both are considered horror classics?

hind. He also needs to stop thinking his opinion of what makes a movie "worthwhile" is the only answer. Even the most poorly made films have fans; after all, they're only entertainment, regardless of their so-called "quality" and stature.

Personally, I hope Femme Fatales continues to cover the low-budget side of the market that so many other publications refuse to acknowledge. We need to get that information from somewhere.

Jackie Johnston
via e-mail

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